This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Tappan Presbyterian Association
LIBRARY

Presented by Mrs. Atterbury.
From Library of Rev. John G. Atterbury, D.D.
4598

BX
7117
.B435

THE

WORKS

OF

THE REV. JOSEPH BELLAMY, D. D.

LATE OF BETHLEM, CONNECTICUT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY STEPHEN DODGE.

PRINTED BY J. SEYMOUR, NO. 49, JOHN-STREET.

1811.

Tappan Pres. Assoc.
4-2-1924

CONTENTS OF VOLUME II.

The Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin.

	Page
Preface,	7
Sermon I.	9
—— II.	29
—— III.	52
—— IV.	75
A Vindication of the Wisdom of God in the Permission of Sin, in answer to a pamphlet, entitled, "An Attempt," &c.	
Preface,	121
Introduction,	123
Sect. I.	125
—— II.	127
—— III.	128
A Dialogue between A. the author of the "Attempt," and B. the author of the Sermons on the Wisdom of God, &c.	131
Theron, Paulinus, and Aspasio, or, Letters and Dialogues upon the nature of Love to God, Faith in Christ, assurance of a title to eternal Life, containing some remarks on the sentiments of the Rev. Messrs. Hervey and Marshal, on these subjects.	
Advertisement,	191
Postscript,	192
Letter I.	193
Dialogue I.	199
—— II.	224
—— III.	274
Letter II.	304
—— III.	309
—— IV.	313
—— V.	319
An Essay on the Nature and Glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, &c. designed as a supplement to the Author's Letters and Dialogues, on the nature of Love to God, Faith in Jesus Christ, and assurance of a title to eternal Life.	
Preface,	331
Introduction,	337
Sect. I. A general view of the nature of the Gospel,	340
—— II. A general view of the glory of the Gospel,	348
—— III. The Divine Law, holy, just, and good, a glorious law antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, and the work of redemption by him,	358

Page

Sect. IV. The design of the Mediatorial Office and work of Christ, was to do honour to the divine Law, - - - - - 376

—— V. Sin an infinite Evil, - - - - - - 402

—— VI. Vindictive Justice an amiable perfection in the Deity; a beauty in the Divine character, - - - - - 413

—— VII. God, who is the supreme, all-sufficient good, can, consistently with his honour, and is willing to become a God and Father, and everlasting portion, to all who return to him through Jesus Christ, - - - - - - - - 427

—— VIII. Repentance is before forgiveness, - - - - - 438

—— IX. The nature and effects, the cause and cure, of a self-righteous spirit, - - - - - - - - - 470

—— X. The nature and consequences of Spiritual blindness; and how the god of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not, 487

—— XI. The nature of Divine Illumination, - - - - 499

—— XII. The effects of Divine Illumination, - - - 510

FOUR SERMONS,

ON THE

WISDOM OF GOD

IN

THE PERMISSION OF SIN.

I bring you good tidings of great joy. *Luke* ii. 10.

Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. *Psalm* xcvii. 11.

—There was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. *Exodus* x. 22, 23.

PREFACE.

GREAT offence hath been taken at the answer the Assembly of Divines have given to this question, *what are the decrees of God?* Answer. *The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his own will, whereby for his own glory he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.* Often hath it been said, "If God fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, then he fore-ordained sin." As though it were evidently the greatest absurdity in nature, to suppose, that God really thought it best in the whole, that sin ever should exist in the world he had made. And I suppose, it is generally taken for granted, that it had been much better, if sin and misery had been for ever unknown; and looked upon one of the most accountable things, that God ever suffered affairs in his world to take such a course as they have. I do not imagine mankind would ever have thought of disputing God's right to lay out a universal plan, had the plan appeared to them wise and good. We do not dispute our superior's right, in time of war, to lay out a plan of operation for an ensuing campaign, although it is expected it will cost many a precious life, when on the whole we think the plan is wise and good. But while mankind take for granted, that the present universal plan is unwise and bad, all things going wrong, they can by no means believe that from eternal ages it was contrived by infinite wisdom and goodness; but are under a necessity to suppose, that they have taken a different course from what God intended, and turned out contrary to his original design and expectation; and that he is really disappointed and grieved.—And doubtless, if God is disappointed and grieved, all the inhabitants of heaven are very sorry too; so that the grief and sorrow is universal in the world above. And if it is universal there, it may well be universal here. And this disappointment, grief, and sorrow, is likely to be eternal, as the wicked, according to Scripture, must be eternally miserable. And thus, it seems, hell will be full of the groans of the damned, for ever lost and undone; and heaven full of disappointment and grief, God and all holy Beings heartily sorry that things have come to such an issue. And where will be the triumph and joy? If God is disappointed and grieved, and angels and saints in heaven are grieved, and poor sinners for ever lost, there seems to be nothing but grief in the whole system; not one being perfectly suited, unless that very worst of all beings, who is called the old serpent, the

devil: who yet is the very one that, above all, was finally to be disappointed, according to the ancient ORACLE, *the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.*

A chief design of the following Sermons, is to rectify these mistaken notions and apprehensions. Not by proposing mere theories, but by turning the reader to a certain light, which shines in this dark and benighted world, the only sure guide we poor mortals have, and to which we do well to give heed, (2 Pet. i. 19.) I mean, the holy Scriptures; but for which, I think, we might have groped in total darkness, as, to this particular, unable ever to have extricated ourselves.

It was necessary, that *the true character of Jesus Christ* should be determined, in order to open the wisdom of God's universal plan to view. This therefore is attempted in the *first Sermon.* And it was equally necessary that the final success of Christ's undertakings should be brought into view, to rectify some mistakes as to matters of fact: and this is attempted in the next. And the reader may see the method I have taken to give light to the main subject, by a careful perusal of the following Sermons on *the Wisdom of God in the permission of Sin.*

And these Sermons are the rather published at this season, when the state of the world and of the Church appears so exceeding gloomy and dark, and still darker times are by many expected, as they are calculated to give consolation to such as fear the Lord, and are disposed to hearken to his holy word. A firm belief of the supreme Godhead of our Saviour, who now sits at the head of the universe, conducting all things, and whose love to his Church is as fervent as it was when he hung on the Cross; and a realizing sense of that glorious day's approaching, when *the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth, as the waters do the sea*; together with an insight into the nature and wisdom of God's universal government, may afford abundant support, let the present storm rise ever so high, and the times grow ever so dark.

JOSEPH BELLAMY.

Bethlem, March 21, 1758.

THE WISDOM OF GOD

IN

THE PERMISSION OF SIN.

SERMON I.

GENESIS l. 20.

Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good.

JACOB being dead and buried, and Joseph still governor over all the land of Egypt, his guilty brethren began to be afraid that Joseph, in whose power they now were, and at whose mercy they now lay, would requite them evil for the inhuman, barbarous, deed they had formerly committed, in selling him for a slave, notwithstanding all his cries and tears, and the anguish of his soul. Wherefore, having first sent messengers to him, to pacify him, and beg his pardon, they venture at last into his presence, and fall down before his face, and resign to his mercy, saying, "Behold, we be thy servants," *i. e.* We have nothing to say for ourselves; we are verily guilty; we are in thy power; we surrender ourselves to thy disposal. Upon which Joseph said unto them, "fear not" any harm from me; "for I am in the place of God," the righteous Judge of the world, to whom vengeance belongs, and with whom you had need make your peace! 'Tis true, indeed, you acted a barbarous and cruel part: "Ye thought evil against me; but God," who had the ordering of the whole affair, "meant it for *good*, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." And while I behold the wisdom and goodness of God, so conspicuous in this dispensation, I have no disposition to revenge the injury you did me: Therefore, fear not; for, instead of requiting you the evil you are sensible you deserve, for your ill treatment of me, I will rather, in imitation of God, who hath been so kind to me in all my distresses, treat you

with all goodness: "I will nourish you and your little ones. Thus he comforted them, and spake kindly to them."

At the same time Joseph viewed the conduct of his brethren, and considered their temper and designs, and the heinousness of their crime, he also beheld the hand of God, which he as plainly saw in the whole affair, permitting and over-ruling his brethren's sin, to answer good and noble ends. And this indisposed him to any angry resentments, and framed his soul only to gratitude to God, and love and kindness to his brethren. His seeing the hand of God in it, or, to use his own language, his seeing that "God meant" he should be sold, and that it was "God who sent him thither," together with the happy experience he had of the wisdom and goodness of God in the affair, not only prepared him to forgive his brethren, but to treat them with all possible tenderness and fraternal goodness. So that he was not only satisfied in the wisdom of God in the permission of that sin, but was thereby better prepared to do his duty.

DOCTRINE.—"A sight of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, is very useful to promote holiness of heart and life. It has a great tendency to make us feel right, and behave well."

Thus it was with Joseph, as we have seen. And thus it was with *Job*, who, while the Sabeans wickedly robbed him, eyed the hand of God, and said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord*." And thus it was with *David*, while Shimei wickedly abused him, going along on the hill over against him, as he was fleeing out of Jerusalem, from the hands of Absalom, his son, and cursed him as he went, saying, "Come out, come out, thou bloody man."—"Let him curse," says David, "for the Lord hath bidden him†." 'I justly deserve it at the hands of the majesty of heaven, against whom I have grievously sinned. A bloody man indeed I am! O, *Uriah! Uriah!*—I shall never forget the blood of the valiant *Uriah!*'

But it is needless to multiply instances. For nothing is plainer than that it must tend to bring us to a right temper of mind, in

* Job 1. † 2 Samuel xvi.

every circumstance of life, to view infinite wisdom, as ordering all things which concern us in the wisest and best manner. Nor could any thought be more shocking to a pious mind, than to conceive the DEITY as unconcerned in human affairs; the devil ruling in the children of disobedience without control; and all things jumbling along in this wicked world, without the least prospect of any good end ever to be answered. But if all things, good and bad, are under the government of infinite wisdom, this affords a sure prospect of a happy issue. And under such a wise and perfect government, we have the greatest inducement to go on cheerfully in the ways of our duty; having always an implicit faith in the supreme Ruler of the universe. Wherefore, the truth of the doctrine being thus plain and evident, I shall only attempt to show,

I. What we are to understand by God's *permitting* sin. And,

II. The *wisdom* of God in the permission of sin. And then,

III. Conclude with a practical improvement.

I. What are we to understand by God's *permitting* sin?

1. Not that he loves sin, or that there is any thing in the nature of sin that he approves of; for it is the abominable thing which his soul hateth. When he viewed the temper, conduct, and design of Joseph's brethren, they each of them appeared perfectly odious in his eyes. Their envy and malice he abhorred; their cruel and barbarous deed he detested; their design intimated in that saying, "And then shall we see what will become of his dreams*," he perfectly disapproved.

2. Much less are we to imagine that God, in permitting sin, deprives the sinner of the freedom of his will. Joseph's brethren felt themselves at liberty; and in the whole affair, acted according to their own inclinations, just as they pleased.

3. God's permitting sin consists merely in not hindering of it. He saw that Joseph's brethren, considering their temper, and how they had their brother out in the field, and how that the Ismaelitish merchants would soon come by, &c. would

* Genesis xxxvii. 20.

certainly sell him, unless he interposed to hinder it. And he could have hindered their selling as easily as he hindered their murdering him. But he did not. He let them take their course.

4. And yet it is self-evident, God never permits sin in the character of an unconcerned spectator, as not caring how affairs go; but as having weighed all circumstances and consequences. Therefore,

5. God never permits sin, but only when, on the whole, all things considered, he judges it best not to hinder it. And therefore,

6. At whatever time God forbears to interpose to hinder the commission of any act of sin, he is not only justifiable in his conduct, but even commendable and praise-worthy; because he has chosen to act in the wisest and best manner. But this leads me,

II. To show the *wisdom* of God in the permission of sin. And I will in the first place begin with some instances that are more plain and easy, and afterwards proceed to what is more intricate and difficult.

1st Instance. And to begin with the affair of *Joseph*, there needs little to be said, to show the manifold wisdom of God in it; for it does not appear that God could, as things were circumstanced, have taken a better method for the advancement of Joseph to be governor over all the land of Egypt, than this. It was a method suited to humble Joseph, and wean him from the world, and bring him to an entire resignation to God, and dependence upon, and devotedness to him; and to prepare him for so high a station, that in it he might conduct with all fidelity to Pharaoh, and humility, goodness, and condescension to all around him; to the honour of the God of Israel, and to the reputation of true religion, in the midst of a people sinking down fast into idolatry and wickedness. It was a method suited to give him a high character in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all Egypt; as one dear to the great God, full of wisdom and benevolence, and the fittest man in Egypt to be so highly advanced and so far betrusted. From a poor prisoner, he rose soon to so high a character, and

was so highly esteemed, as to become a father to Pharaoh, and to all Egypt.

Nor does it appear that, as things were circumstanced, God could have taken a better method than this to provide for the sustenance of Jacob's family; of the Egyptians, and of the nations throughout the land of Canaan, through a famine of seven years' continuance. It was a method suited to dispose Pharaoh and all Egypt to receive Jacob's family kindly, and give them a hearty welcome; as they were the kindred of Joseph, their great benefactor. It was a method suited to humble Joseph's brethren, and not only to bring them to repentance for their sin, but to a better temper in general. And as the selling of Joseph had been matter of severe trial to Jacob, who verily thought him dead, and expected to go down to the grave sorrowing; so, in the issue, the whole was suited abundantly to establish him in the belief of the being and perfections of God, and of his government of the world; and to give him an affecting, ravishing sense of the holiness, wisdom, goodness, power, and faithfulness of the God of Abraham his father; and to confirm him in the expectation of the accomplishment of all God's promises. And, in the mean time, the Egyptians, and all the nations inhabiting the land of Canaan, were provided for with food through a long and sore famine, in a manner suited to convince them of the vanity of their idols, and to bring them to an high esteem of the God of the Hebrews, to whose kind interposition their whole support was owing. And thus God left not himself without witness, in that dark and benighted age of the world, when all the nations were sinking fast down into idolatry. For the whole affair of the selling of Joseph; of the conduct of his mistress; of his unshaken virtue; of his imprisonment; of his interpreting the dreams of his fellow-prisoners; of his being brought to Pharaoh's court and interpreting his dreams: of his advancement, and of all his conduct in that high station, would naturally be noised abroad, not only throughout all Egypt, but also through all the land of Canaan, from whence they daily came into Egypt for bread; yea, the news of these things would be apt to fly far and wide among all the nations round about, to the glory of the true God, and to the honour

of the true religion, and to the condemnation of an idolatrous world, who had forsaken the Lord Jehovah, and gone after idols, that could neither see, nor hear, nor help. All which good ends, and many more, God had in view. Wherefore,

Although Joseph's brethren acted a very wicked, cruel, God-provoking part, in selling their brother, notwithstanding all his cries and tears, and the anguish of his soul, with an envious, malicious, and impious intention to prevent the accomplishment of his divine dreams, scoffingly saying among themselves, "And then we shall see what will become of his dreams;" yet, at the same time, the God of Abraham acted truly like himself, a noble, a God-like part, in letting them take their course, with a design to over-rule it, as he did to accomplish his dreams; and that in a way so much to his own glory, and so much to the general good. And how know we but that the infinitely wise Governor of the universe, when he permitted angels and man to fall, and things in the intelligent system to take such a course as they have, designed to over-rule the whole so, (according to a plan he had then in view,) as that, in the issue, God should be more exalted, and the system more holy and happy than if sin and misery had never entered?

But to proceed to a

2d Instance of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin. Sometime after Joseph's death, when the children of Israel were greatly multiplied, there arose another king in Egypt, who knew not Joseph, nor paid the least regard to his memory; who, to enrich himself, attempted to bring the Israelites into a perpetual bondage; and to that end set task-masters over them, who made them serve with rigour. And, observing how exceedingly they multiplied, lest they should become too numerous and potent, and get themselves up out of a land in which they were so abused, Pharoah ordered the midwives to kill their male children. But the midwives proving unfaithful to his injunctions, he laid his commands on all his people in general, to take every male child and cast it into the river*. All which was inhuman and barbarous to the last degree.

As God had provided for the kind entertainment of the

* Exodus 1.

Israelites, by the means of Joseph, whom he sent before them, so he could have provided for the continuation of their tranquillity, and restrained Pharaoh from this tyrannical conduct. But he chose to bring all these distresses upon them, to wean them from the idols and pleasures of Egypt; to make them mindful of the promised land, and to prepare them for their approaching deliverance, and for their wilderness-travels. Therefore, he wisely let Pharaoh take his course. For the Israelites were so kindly received in Joseph's day, and so generously provided for, that they began after a while to forget the land of Canaan, and feel themselves at home, and fall in love with the customs and idolatries of Egypt. And had it not been that Pharaoh attempted their slavery, and treated them with so great severity, there would have been danger of their forgetting the God of their fathers totally, and incorporating at length with the Egyptians; so that they greatly needed these distresses to make them willing to leave Egypt, and discern the goodness of God in their deliverance, and to awaken them and their posterity, in ages then to come, to a sense of their great obligations to God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage*.

Besides, at the same time that God, by the cruel tyranny of Pharaoh, was preparing the Israelites for their deliverance, he also over-ruled his barbarity to give an occasion of raising them up a deliverer. For Pharaoh having ordered all the male children to be cast into the river, Moses' mother, after having concealed him three months, durst keep him no longer, and so left him in an ark of bulrushes, at the side of the river, to the mercy of the cruel Egyptians. Here Pharaoh's daughter finds him; is touched with compassion; relieves the poor weeping infant. And now Moses is called the "Son of Pharaoh's daughter," and is educated in Pharaoh's court, and instructed in all the learning of Egypt; and finally, completely furnished for the glorious work designed him. For Pharaoh seeking Moses' life, he was obliged to flee to the land of Midian; where, in the solitary life of a shepherd, he spent forty years, until he became the meekest man on earth. And being thus endowed with an extraordinary measure of human learning and of divine grace, God sends him to deliver

* Exodus xx. 2.

his people, who had been groaning under their sore bondage above one hundred years. "O, the depth of the knowledge and wisdom of God!"

The very methods which Pharaoh, in his great policy, takes to bind down the Hebrews in perpetual slavery, God overrules, to prepare them for, and to bring about their deliverance. And while Pharaoh is hurried on in his schemes, by his insatiable avarice, and indulges to barbarous cruelty, God, the infinitely wise superintendant, calmly looks on, and lets him take his course, conscious of his own almightiness, and having his own glorious plan all before him. And how know we but that this same infinitely wise Being, who has had the government of the universe in his hands from the beginning, had some noble God-like design in view, when he first permitted sin and misery to enter into the world which he had made?

But to proceed to a

3d Instance of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin.

Pharaoh, full of a sense of his own greatness and power, and of the advantages which would accrue to him from the labours of so many servants, no sooner perceived Moses' design, but he firmly resolved never to let Israel go. And when Moses assured him that the God of the Hebrews had appeared to him, he bid defiance, not only to Moses, but to his God. "I know not the Lord, nor will I let Israel go." And the more Moses insisted upon their release, the more his pride and covetousness wrought. For his honour's sake he scorned to yield; and for his interest's sake he many a time resolved he never would.

For the supreme Monarch of the universe, who does according to his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, had looked on the bold, the daring, the haughty wretch, and determined to leave him to his own heart, to take his own way, and do as he pleased; foreseeing just how he would conduct, and how the affair would finally issue.

Go, says God to Moses, go unto Pharaoh, and say, "Thus saith the Lord, let Israel go, that they may serve me. But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go; no, not

by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand and smite Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in the midst thereof. And Pharaoh shall know that I am the Lord; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord. Yea, my name shall be declared throughout all the earth. And thus do I order the affair that thou also mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs that I have done amongst them, that ye may know that I am the LORD."

Moses goes and delivers his message to Pharaoh, saying, "Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, let my people go, that they may serve me." "Begone to your burdens," says Pharaoh to the Israelites. "And you, Moses, do you hinder the people no longer from their labour. And you, task-masters, give them no straw; for they are idle and wanton, and full of notions; but I will tame these Hebrews, and make them know they had better been content where they were." So the task-masters with rigour drive on the Israelites to perform their impossible tasks, and beat them for non-performance. They cry to Pharaoh, but cry in vain. "Ye are idle, ye are idle," says he, "and full of notions. Be gone! No mercy shall be shown you. I will make you repent your new scheme before I have done with you." Thus Pharaoh storms, drives, sets up himself, hardens his heart, resolved they shall never go.

Whereupon the God of Israel "wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan. He turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink: He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them, and frogs which destroyed them: He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust: He devoured their vines with hail, and their sicamore-trees with frost: He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts: He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them: He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death; but gave their life over to the pestilence: and smote all the first-born in Egypt; the chief of their strength, in the tabernacles of Ham. But made his own people to go forth like sheep:

he led them on safely; but the sea overwhelmed their enemies."

Pharaoh's design was, if possible, to prevent the egress of the Hebrews, that he might keep them for his slaves; and that they, and all the world might know, that he was too potent and mighty a prince to be subdued and conquered by the God of the Hebrews, to whom, from the beginning, he had bid defiance.

God's designs were, by severe and cruel bondage, to wean the Israelites from Egypt; or, at least, to force them, weaned or not, to leave the country and be gone. Therefore, he let Pharaoh loose, so unmercifully to oppress them. And as for Pharaoh, God let him lift up himself, harden his heart, be as stout and haughty as he pleased: that, as he was desirous, so he might have full opportunity to try his strength with the God of the Hebrews: that, in the issue, he might know, and the Egyptians might know, to their shame and confusion, that he was the Lord, the only true and living God, infinitely superior to all their idols. And, in the mean time, he designed to give a lively picture of himself, as of one infinitely too wise, great, and powerful, for feeble mortals to contend with; resolved to vindicate his own honour at all events, and revenge affronts offered his Majesty, and carry on his own designs in spite of all opposition, that the Israelites might see it, and know it for their good; that all the inhabitants of Canaan might be struck into a panic; and, indeed, that his name might be declared throughout all the earth. For he intended that these his mighty works should never be forgotten among men, so long as the sun and moon should endure.

Methinks I behold Moses, on the other side of the Red sea, standing safe on the shore, while the carcasses of the Egyptians, their broken chariots, their drowned horses, part sunk to the bottom, and part floating upon the sea, and scattered along the coasts. There he stands, he looks back, he surveys the gracious, the dreadful, the glorious works of the God of Abraham, from the day he saw the burning bush in the wilderness of Horeb, and received his commission to act in this grand affair. Pharaoh's haughty temper; his impious, covetous, tyrannical, deceitful conduct, all rise clear to his view. The astonishing works of the God of Israel; his

righteous vengeance on his foes, his self-moving goodness and sovereign grace to the Israelites, torn away from their idols, and delivered out of the house of bondage, all fill his astonished soul; and the powerful impressions penetrate the centre of his heart. He looks forward, too, to the promised Canaan, to which the Almighty had now undertaken to lead them, and imagines what terror the news of all these things would spread through all the land. Inspired with these views; ravished with the glory of the God of Israel; charmed with the majesty and beauty of the divine conduct, he spake, saying:

"I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation. He is my GOD, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: Thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee. Thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. Who is like unto thee, O LORD, amongst the gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou, in thy mercy, hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed. The people shall hear and be afraid. Sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestine. All the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them. By the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over which thou hast purchased. The LORD shall reign for ever and ever*."

And while Moses thus sang the praises of God, the supreme Monarch of the universe, and celebrated his glorious triumph over Pharaoh and all his idol-gods; so ravished with the wisdom, glory, and beauty of the divine conduct, as to be even more attached to his honour and interest than ever, and even the better prepared to conduct with that steady fidelity through all the future trials of his life, always true to God, and heartily concerned to see the honour of his great name

secured; I say, while Moses was full of these divine views and tempers on this grand occasion, all Egypt were in profound darkness; and these dispensations, so bright and glorious in the view of Moses, to them appeared gloomy as death.

And if these dispensations of divine Providence, which to the Egyptians appeared so dark and gloomy, to Moses appeared so full of divine wisdom, beauty, and glory, how know we, but that God's whole plan of government, how dark soever it may now appear to a revolted world, under God's displeasure, may, to saints and angels, after the general judgment, appear perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty, and be matter of their eternal delight and praise? But to proceed,

4thly, To other instances of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin.

The Israelites, having thus escaped the hands of Pharaoh, and recovered their liberty, had it been left to them to direct their march, and point out their future fortunes, they might perhaps have thought it best, that, being led on directly to the land of Canaan, they should, by the mighty power of God, have been put into an immediate possession, to be followed with scenes of feasting, joy, and mirth, never to be interrupted.

But God, who knew their hearts; who knew how deeply tainted they were with the idolatries and manners of Egypt, and how high a relish they had for sensual pleasures, might easily foresee how all sense of the true God would soon be lost in the midst of such prosperity, and they become no better than the ejected Canaanites. Besides, he saw that in almost every other respect, they were as yet unprepared to enter the promised land. And also he designed them for our ensamples, and his dispensations towards them for the instruction of mankind to the end of the world. Wherefore, let us attend to the divine conduct, and behold the manifold wisdom of God.

He had torn them away from their idols, their leeks, their onions, and their flesh-pots, to which they were stupidly attached. He had sent to them, by Moses, and commanded, "that they should cast away every man the abominations of his eyes, and not defile themselves with the idols of Egypt any more;

for that he himself, was the LORD their GOD." But although the thunder of divine wrath so dreadfully roared thoughout all the land of Egypt among the Egyptians, and God was now, in a miraculous manner, working their deliverance; yet, even now, they rebelled against the Lord, and would not hearken unto him. "They did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt." Wherefore God said, "I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish mine anger upon them, in the midst of the land of Egypt*." But then God considered what the Egyptians would say to such a dispensation of providence, and how it would be misinterpreted through all nations and ages. "Wherefore, he wrought for his great name's sake that it might not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, and in whose sight God intended to make himself known to the Israelites by bringing them out of the land of Egypt†." And therefore, instead of the destruction they deserved from his hands, for their stupid attachment to Egyptian abominations, God let loose Pharaoh to increase their burdens, to make their bondage absolutely intolerable, that he might force them from their idols, and drive them out of Egypt. And to bring them still more to their senses, God let Pharaoh loose to pursue them with chariots,

* If when God met with such infinite provocations at the hands of the Hebrews, he could yet find in his heart to prosecute his design, and accomplish his promise to Abraham, that to his seed he would give the land of Canaan, we cannot have the least reason to doubt but that, notwithstanding all the present wickedness of his professing people in the world, whereby he is infinitely provoked to resign all Christendom to destruction, he will yet prosecute his designs, and accomplish all his promises,—"Give to his son the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession; and bring every people, nation, language, and tongue, to serve him; and satan shall be bound, and Christ shall reign on earth for a thousand years."—No obstacles, no discouragements, no provocations, no difficulties, of whatever kind, or however great, can hinder God from the accomplishment of the glorious designs of his grace. He redeemed Israel out of Egypt, although he saw what they were then, and what they would be in all future times. Yea, he has given his SON, and that to the death of the cross, in order to carry on his designs. And what will not GOD ALMIGHTY then do? ALMIGHTINESS, SO INFINITELY engaged, cannot and will not be frustrated.

† Ezekiel xx. 5—9.

and horsemen, and a great army; and contrived that he should overtake them, shut in among the mountains, unable to make their escape; that he might have opportunity to let Israel see his mighty power, in dividing the sea, and make them feel their dependance upon and obligations to him; and that, having led them through the sea, he might have them in a barren wilderness, where there was neither bread, nor flesh, nor water, as the fittest scene for those transactions, and grand events, belonging to the infinitely wise plan which God had laid out.

Israel had been in Egypt 215 years*; and the latter part of the time, for above an hundred years in a state of bondage and slavery. They had almost forgotten the true God, and the true religion; were habituated to the idolatry and manners of Egypt; well pleased with the country; and, but for their oppressions, would never have entertained any thoughts of leaving it. Yea, notwithstanding their severe bondage, were hardly prevailed upon to hearken to Moses, to whom they said, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians," as they afterwards upbraided him in their distress at the Red sea†. And they were of so mean and dastardly a spirit, as to be unfit to march against their enemies. God, who knew their temper, judged that if he had led them from Egypt strait to Canaan, which was not an hundred miles distant, the approach of their enemies, prepared for war, would have frightened them back again to Egypt‡. Yea, such was their attachment to Egypt, their coldness to Canaan, their coward

* From the covenant with Abraham, to the giving of the law, was, (as St. Paul asserts, Gal. iii. 17.) 430 years. And this will give light to Gen. xv. 13. and to Exod. xii. 40, 41. For the law was given soon after they came out of Egypt.

Joseph was 17 years old when he was sold, and it is supposed he was soon imprisoned, perhaps the very same year, and so that he lay in prison about 13 years; for he was 30 at his advancement. After which, in about nine years, Jacob and all his family came down into Egypt. After which Joseph lived 71 years. And so, in all, was in the greatest honour 80 years, to counterbalance 13 years of sorrow. Israel came out of Egypt 144 years after Joseph's death; the greatest part of which time they were under oppression. Moses was born 64 years after Joseph's death; spent 40 in Pharaoh's court, and 40 in the land of Midian.

† Exodus xiv. 12.

‡ Exodus xiii. 17.

ice and their stupid infidelity, even after a year's dicipline in the wilderness, and notwithstanding their solemn profession and promises to God at Mount Sinai, that, upon the ill tidings of the spies, they were for stoning Caleb and Joshua, and making to themselves a captain, and returning to their beloved Egypt.

Now such were the people God had to manage, so every way distempered, that they needed all their old notions, tastes, and tempers, to be eradicated; and to have their minds wholly framed anew, in order to be fit inhabitants for the holy land.

They must be thoroughly weaned from Egypt; from their idolatry and their manners; and be brought to know the true God, and to be sensible of his infinite abhorrence of their tempers and ways, and have their hearts effectually broken under a sense of their vileness, that they might loath themselves, and turn to the Lord, and love him, and be prepared to understand and fall in with the religion he gave them from Mount Sinai, that they might be an holy people to the Lord, a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation; that they might be to his praise and glory, in the midst of an idolatrous, benighted world; and that they might receive the promised land, not as a reward of their righteousness; for they were a stiff-necked people; but as a mere free gift from the God of Abraham, their father; and feel themselves, by the means, laid under the strongest obligations to love him, and fear him, and walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands: and at the same time, be so inured to hardship, and so thoroughly confirmed in the belief of the being and perfections of God, as that, in an entire dependance on the Lord, they might march into the promised land, and behave like valiant soldiers, and execute God's vengeance on those idolatrous nations whom he had doomed to destruction; break down their altars; cut down their groves; burn their gods, and extirpate both them and their religion from off the face of the earth.

And what method, better suited to answer these noble ends, could possibly have been devised, than that which the Lord their God took for the space of forty years in the wilderness?

Wherein he humbled them, and proved them, and tried them, that it might appear what was in their hearts; and he left them to hunger and to thirst, and to murmur and rebel, and to commit idolatry, that their hearts might be turned inside out before their eyes; and, by a long course of discipline, he trained them up to a sense of his being, and perfections, and government, and to feel their dependance on him, and obligations to him, and by experience learn the dreadful nature of sin. He fed them with angel's food, and gave them water out of the flinty rock; he led them by day in a cloud, and in the night by a pillar of fire; but when they rebelled, the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed up hundreds, and the plague swept away thousands at a stroke; yea, at last, the whole congregation of six hundred thousand were doomed to fall in the wilderness.

Nothing impresses the heart of a human creature like FACTS. Nor could any series of facts have been better contrived than these to reach their hearts, and make them feel what they were in the sight of infinite holiness, and to bring them to fear the glorious and fearful name of the Lord their God.

At the side of the Red sea they were, to appearance, full of love to God, and there they sang his praise. And had things gone to their minds, they might never have suspected the secret hypocrisy of their hearts. But, as God had contrived the plan, in three days their religious affections were gone, and their corrupt hearts, like the troubled sea, cast up mire and dirt. God knew what they were before, and it was wise in him to take this method to bring them to know it too.

At Mount Sinai they were again deeply affected, when the law was given in a manner so solemn and divine; and there they promised, that whatsoever the Lord their God should command them, that would they do. But in less than forty days they made them a calf after the manner of Egypt, and eat and drank, and rose up to play, after the Egyptian mode. God knew before that all this was in their hearts; and now he wisely permitted it to break out, that they might know it too, and that he might have a good opportunity to let them see how exceedingly he hated their ways. He had tried

WORDS, but these would not do. He had used the plainest and strongest expressions in the first and second commandments, but they were not effectual. Now he proceeds to FACTS. Three thousand are slain by the sword at his command, to let the whole congregation KNOW how detestable their conduct was in his eyes*.

And so again, while the tabernacle was building, and at the time of its dedication, they appeared very forward in religion, as though they loved God, and loved his worship, and were determined for the future to be an obedient people. And this lasted for about a year. And doubtless they thought themselves sincere, and always might have thought so, had no new trials come on. But no sooner did the spies return from viewing the land of Canaan, and bring ill-tidings, but their old Egyptian temper all revived. Now Joshua and Caleb must be stoned for pleading the Lord's cause, and a new captain chosen to conduct them back to Egypt, which they left with reluctance about a year ago; willing, it seems, for ever to part with their God, their tabernacle, and their religion; and turn back to the idols and manners, and leeks, and onions of Egypt; and make their peace with the Egyptians as they could. And had not the ALMIGHTY suddenly interposed, no doubt dreadful deeds would soon have been done. God knew all this was in their hearts before; and now he wisely permitted it to break out that they might know it too, and that, by his future conduct toward that people, he might let them know that he was the Lord, and fill the whole earth with his glory†.

And while that generation was doomed to wander forty years in the wilderness, and their carcasses there to fall as the just punishment of their crimes, their posterity, by the means, had their Egyptian notions and tempers eradicated, and were trained up in the knowledge of God, and of the true religion; and prepared to enter, conquer, and possess, the holy land. Nor could they ever, to their dying day, forget the works of the Lord their God, which they had seen in Egypt, at the Red sea, in the wilderness, &c. Nor could they have had

* Exodus xxxii. 28. † Numbers xiv.

stronger inducements to tell these things to their sons, and sons' sons. Nor could a better method have been taken to lay a lasting foundation for a firm belief, and steady practice of the true religion,

It was most for the honour of God, and most for the interest of religion; and so really for the best good of the Israelites, that they should be thus tried; left to act out their hearts, and then punished, subdued, humbled, and brought into subjection to the divine authority, before they entered into possession of the promised land, although it cost them six hundred thousand lives, and many a dreadful day. For to what purpose had it been for God to have brought them straight from Egypt, with all their Egyptian notions and tempers, into the holy land, there to have polluted it, and to have dishonoured him with their abominations*?

Besides, from the murmurings and rebellions of the Israelites in the wilderness, there was the fullest demonstration of the divinity of the Jewish religion. For, had not Moses been sent of God, and supported, too, by the interposition of ALMIGHTY POWER, it had been impossible he should have accomplished the design. They would surely have deserted him, and returned to Egypt again. Nor could the children of Israel, how degenerate soever they were, and how apt soever to fall into idolatry, in after ages, ever once scruple whether Moses were indeed sent of God, after such a scene of wonders for forty years together. Nor does it appear that the divine legation of Moses was ever called in question by that people.

And whenever they read over the law of Moses, together with the history interspersed in those sacred books, they might not only learn the nature of God and man, and see God's

* If it was wise in God so to order, that the Israelites should be oppressed above an hundred years before their deliverance, and then pass through such great trials forty years more, before their entrance into the holy land; how know we but it may be wise that the Christian church in general, and we, in New-England, in particular, should pass through very dark and trying times, for a long season, before God begins to work deliverance in that remarkable manner which may be expected at the ushering in of the glorious day. To be sure, there seems to be a foundation laid for great distresses, and of long continuance, for our sinful land. Better so than to be left to sleep on, secure in sin. Nothing so dreadful as to be given up to carnal security, and suffered to go on in wickedness and prosper.

right to command; their obligations to obey; and the great evil of sin, from the law of Moses, as being therein held forth; but might behold all these exemplified, in a most striking manner, in a series of FACTS. Let them but view the divine conduct in Egypt, at the Red sea, in the wilderness, &c. and it would give them a most lively picture of the DIVINE NATURE; for here they had the HISTORY of the DEITY. And let them view the conduct of the Israelites from first to last, and it would give them a most lively picture of human nature; for here they had it acted out to the life. And God's right to command, their obligations to obey, and the great evil of sin, are set in the strongest light. Nor were the advantages of these transactions confined to those ages; for all these things happened, and were written for our instruction, on whom the ends of the world are come. God is still the same, and so is human nature too. For, as face answers to face in a glass, so does the heart of man to man. O, the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God! Of whom, and by whom, and to whom are all things; to whom belongs glory for ever! And how know we but that the grand affairs of the universe are all conducted as wisely, as were these now in our view?

To conclude; let these four remarks be well attended to, and remembered:

1. That, in all these instances of God's permitting sin, he had a view to the manifestation of himself. They gave him opportunities to act out his heart; and so to show what he was, and how he stood affected: and he intended, by his conduct, to set himself, i. e. all his perfections, in a full, clear, strong point of light: that it might be known that he was the LORD, and that the whole earth might be filled with his glory.

2. And he intended to let his creatures give a true specimen of themselves: that it might be known what was in their hearts. But,

3. The advantages of acquaintance with God and ourselves are innumerable. We can be neither humble, holy, nor happy, without it. So that,

4. It may easily be seen, how that God, in the permission of sin, may design to advance his own glory, and the good of his creatures. And that this was really God's design, in the instances which have been under consideration, is manifest from the five books of Moses, in which the history of these things is recorded at large. Particularly, I desire the 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters of Deuteronomy may be read, in this view.

THE WISDOM OF GOD

IN

THE PERMISSION OF SIN.

SERMON II.

GENESIS l. 20.

Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good.

WISDOM consists in choosing the best end, and contriving the most proper means to attain it.

The MESSIAH had been promised to our first parents, about two thousand years ago; and the time of his advent was approaching: but the world were greatly unprepared for such an event. They did not know that they were in a fallen state, and that they needed a Redeemer and a Sanctifier. They neither knew God, nor themselves; what they were, nor what they ought to be; nor what they needed to bring them right; and were sinking, by swift degrees, into still grosser ignorance and the most stupid idolatry. And had God suffered them all to have taken their own course, till the MESSIAH'S birth, ignorance and depravity would have risen to such a height as to have rendered mankind wholly unprepared for the gospel-dispensation.

Wherefore, God must interpose, and some method must be taken to check the universal spread of idolatry and ignorance, and to revive the knowledge of the true God, and of the law of nature; and to make mankind sensible of their depravity, of their guilt, and ill-desert, and need of a Redeemer and Sanctifier; and so prepare a way for the coming of Christ, and the erection of his spiritual kingdom.

With these views, about two thousand years before the birth of the Messiah, God called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, and separated him from an idolatrous world, and

chose his seed to be his people; that, in his dealings with them, he might bear a public testimony against idolatry, in the sight of all the nations of the earth; and, at the same time, exhibit a most exact picture of himself in his conduct, and set his character in the most glaring, striking, affecting light; that, stupid as they were, they should be, as it were, forced to see and understand what he was. And, at the same time, he would let them know what they ought to be, and the greatness of their obligations to the Deity; and turn their hearts inside out, that they might see themselves, and discern their true character, and so feel their need of a Redeemer and Sanctifier. And then he would exhibit in types and shadows, i. e. by sacrifices of atonement, and purifications for uncleanness, the nature of an atonement of Christ, and of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; and thus prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, and the erection of his spiritual kingdom in the world: and that not only among the Jews, thus trained up, but also among Gentiles, who, in after ages, should be let into these divine dispensations and designs, and reap the benefit of all these preparatory and introductory steps.

Had Joseph not been sold, and had Jacob continued to live in the land of Canaan, with his family, and had his posterity there gradually increased, until they had filled all the land, (the Canaanites meanwhile dying off, as the Indians have done in N. E. these 130 years past,) I say, had his posterity gradually increased until they had filled all the land, without any uncommon changes, or any extraordinary interpositions of providence, none of the forementioned ends could have been answered. Yea, there would apparently have been the utmost danger that the Israelites would have been no better than the Canaanites had been: and God might foresee that this would infallibly be the case; and so all his ends in separating Abraham and his seed, wholly frustrated.

On the other hand, if Joseph is sold; if Jacob and his family move down and settle in Egypt, the chief seat of idolatry, a proper scene opens in the view of infinite wisdom, where all his wonders might be wrought; and fit opportuni-

ties, he foresaw, would present for the accomplishment of all the purposes of his heart.

Nothing further was needful than for God not to hinder Joseph's brethren, and they would sell him; not to hinder Potiphar's wife, and she would get him cast into prison, where he might be prepared for, and from whence he might be raised to the highest advancement, by which many noble and God-like ends might be answered. Nothing further was needful than for God not to hinder the king of Egypt, and he would oppress the Israelites till they were prepared for their egression; not to hinder Pharaoh, and he would harden his heart, and refuse to let them go, until Egypt was filled with the wonderful works of God. Yea, if God hindered him not, into the Red sea he would drive head-long, hurried on by the corruptions of his heart, that, in his destruction, God might show his power, and cause his name to be declared throughout all the earth. And now the Hebrews, rescued from Pharaoh's destroying sword, by almighty power, would be in the hands of God, their deliverer, to be disciplined; to be humbled, and proved, and tried, that it might be known what was in their hearts; and that, finally, they might be prepared to enter the promised land, and execute the vengeance of the ALMIGHTY on those idolatrous nations, and be God's peculiar people, till the MESSIAH'S coming, and the erection of his spiritual kingdom. I say, be God's peculiar people; to receive the LAW from Sinai; to be under God's immediate government; to keep the holy oracles; to preserve the predictions of the Messiah, and to answer many other noble and divine ends God had in view.

A plan, in which so much sin was to be permitted, and so much misery endured, might, by short-sighted mortals, have been thought dishonourable to God, and unhappy for the Israelites; but, under the management of infinite wisdom, it proves the direct contrary. Yea, for aught that appears, God could not have taken a better method, as things then stood in the world, to make himself known, and get honour to his great name, and make the Israelites sensible of their dependance upon him, and obligations to him, and engage them to perpetual obedience, than that. As it is written, "What

could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"

Yea, it was a plan not only suited to be beneficial in that age, but in all succeeding generations; and that in more instances than can well be enumerated. Particularly, it has furnished us with a HISTORY of the DEITY, and with a HISTORY of HUMAN NATURE. Such a history as is indeed of infinite value: for every thing is exemplified in FACTS; by which the mind is instructed more clearly, and the heart reached more effectually, than in any other way.

The invisible God, whom no eye hath seen, or can see, and of whom it is so difficult for us, in this benighted world, to frame just conceptions, is brought upon the stage; and he acts out his nature before our eyes, with a design to set his true character in a clear and striking light. Here we see, as it were with our eyes, how he fore-ordained whatsoever came to pass; how he laid out the whole plan from the selling of Joseph to his advancement, and to Jacob's going down into Egypt; and how they should be oppressed and brought into bondage, and how they should finally be brought forth, and led in the wilderness, and prepared for Canaan, &c. And we see the wisdom, glory, and beauty of his plan. Here we see what a regard he has for his own honour, and how his whole plan is suited to set him in that infinitely honourable point of light, which so exactly becomes him, as he is by nature, God, and by original right, the supreme Lord and Governor of the world. Here we see his resolution to maintain his authority, in his conduct to Pharaoh, that haughty rebel, who bid him defiance, and stoutly refused to let Israel go. Here we see his sovereign grace and self-moving goodness, as it were, forcing the infatuated Israelites from their beloved Egypt, and their beloved idols; and when he had the highest provocations to destroy them, how he wrought for his great name's sake, until he had prepared them for, and brought them into, the promised land. And how, in the mean time, he set his hatred of their sins in the clearest and strongest light; commanding the earth to open its mouth and swallow up hundreds, and the plague to go forth, from time to time, and cut down thousands in a moment; yea, dooming

that whole generation to wander and fall in the wilderness for their crimes, reserving the good land for their posterity. Here we see him exercising his sovereignty, when the Israelites and the Egyptians both deserved destruction, and to have been buried alive in the Red sea together; he had mercy on whom he would have mercy; and whom he would, he gave up to hardness of heart and ruin. And after the Israelites had been in the wilderness above a year, and had sufficiently shown what they were, and carried their provocation so high, that divine justice said, "Let me alone, that I may destroy them in a moment," still he wrought for his great name's sake, and had mercy on them, because he would have mercy on them; and was gracious to them, because he would be gracious to them: i. e. from his self-moving goodness and sovereign grace*. And by all, we see that not any thing whatsoever is able to frustrate God's design, or hinder the faithful accomplishment of his promise to Abraham, that to his seed he would give the land of Canaan.

At the same time, we have HUMAN NATURE brought upon the stage, and experiments made upon the heart of man, in a great variety; whereby its true temper is as certainly determined

* EXODUS xxxiii. 29. NUMBERS xiv. From these dispensations, which were acknowledged to be right by the Jews, St. Paul was able to justify the divine conduct, in his day, in casting off the Jews, and calling the Gentiles. Romans ix. "If God had a right to give up Pharaoh to hardness of heart, and to destruction, in the days of old, as ye Jews own; why not you now?—If the exercises of God's grace were sovereign then to your fathers, who deserved, God being judge, to be all consumed in a moment; why may not the Gentiles, notwithstanding their ill deserts, be now called and saved, from the same sovereign grace? God used to act as a sovereign; why may he not still? and if, in one instance, why not in another altogether similar?" Nor could the Jew fairly evade the force of this reasoning. And if we should only suppose, that Pharaoh after he was drowned, went to hell, and that the unbelieving Jews of that age, who were cast off by God for their infidelity, were eternally lost, then we have the doctrine of reprobation, which has been so much misunderstood and misrepresented, exemplified in FACTS. For whatsoever God does in time, that he, from all eternity, intended to do. Yea, and that which is right for God to do in time, he had a right, from eternity, to determine to do. Yea, if God, in FACT, governs the world WELL, then he did WELL to determine to govern it as he does. Reasonable creatures would never object against God's laying out a universal plan, if the plan did but suit their taste.

as was ever the nature of any thing in the natural world, by the great Sir *Isaac Newton**.

So that, on these, as well as many other accounts, that plan was not only for the honour of God, and good of the Israelites, but for the benefit of mankind in all succeeding generations.

And how know we but that it was designed by the infinitely wise God, as a little kind of PICTURE, in which we might see, in miniature, the nature of God's government of the whole moral system, and the reasons of his permitting sin and misery to enter into the world he had made? Which brings me,

Secondly. After having viewed the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, in various plain instances, to proceed humbly to search into the wisdom of God, in EVER permitting sin and misery to enter the world.

And, 1. As all God's works are uniform, so we may justly argue, from the wisdom and beauty of particular parts, to the wisdom and beauty of the whole. As God's nature is always the same, and as he always acts like himself, so, therefore, his works are always harmonious and consistent. So that if we can see the wisdom of God in the permission of sin in some instances, we may justly argue to his wisdom in his

* OBJECTION. "But it can never be supposed that the true character of human nature, in general, can be decided from the perverse conduct of the Israelites in the wilderness."

ANSWER. Was not their conduct, then, of a piece with the general tenour of their conduct, from that time and forward, for fifteen hundred years, when they slew their prophets, yea, and crucified the Son of God? Acts vii. 51, 52.

OBJ. "If it was, yet it is not to be supposed, that every nation would have been so wicked and perverse as the Jews were, if under like circumstances."

ANS. But it is the common character of an apostate, fallen world, that they are "dead in sin." Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3.

OBJ. "These words were spoken of the Gentiles, and so are nothing to the purpose."

ANS. Seeing, then, (according to these men,) the character of mankind cannot be learned from what is said in the Old or New Testament, of Jews or Gentiles; but we, in this age and nation are quite another kind of creatures, so benevolent, so good, so virtuous; methinks the Old and New Testaments are writings not suited to our case; as they are not adapted to men of our character. And perhaps this is one reason those ancient writings are in so low credit with many in the British dominions; and Plato begins to be more admired than Moses, or St. Paul.

whole grand scheme. Yea, and from the wisdom, glory, and beauty of particular parts, we may be rationally convinced, that God's grand scheme is perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty, although it be so incomprehensibly great, as to confound our understandings. If we certainly know that God's works are all uniform, and if there is one small part that we can understand and comprehend, and if we see this is perfectly wise, we may be assured the whole is so too; although when we try to look into it, we feel our minds quite overwhelmed with its incomprehensible greatness.

2. Yea, were there no particular instance in which we could see the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, yet, from the perfections of the divine nature alone, we have such full evidence that he must always act in the wisest and best manner, as that we ought not in the least to doubt it.

In the days of eternity, long before the foundation of the world, this system, now in existence, and this plan which now takes place, and all other possible systems, and all other possible plans, more in number perhaps than the very sands on the sea-shore, all equally lay open to the Divine view, and one as easy to Almightiness as another. He had his choice. He had none to please but himself; beside him there was no Being. He had a perfectly good taste, and nothing to bias his judgment, and was infinite in wisdom: this he chose; and this, of all possible systems, therefore, was the best, infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude being judges. If, therefore, the whole were as absolutely incomprehensible by us as it is by children of four years old, yet we ought firmly to believe the whole to be perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty.

3. But if all God's works are uniform, as has been said, we may not only argue from the wisdom of particular parts to the wisdom of the whole, but also from the special nature of particular parts to the special nature of the whole; and so, from a right idea of particular parts, which we are able to comprehend, we may have some right conceptions of the whole, although the whole is too great for our conception. And so here is a clue which will lead us to a right view of the true nature of the whole moral system, and help us, at least, to some partial view of the wisdom, glory, and beauty of the whole.

4. And, indeed, it seems to have been God's design, in this state of instruction and discipline, where we first come into existence, and, from small beginnings, are to grow up to a more full knowledge of God, and insight into his moral government of the world; the contemplation of which will afford the most intense delight to all holy beings, throughout eternal ages. I say, it seems to have been God's design to suit things to the present weakness of our capacities, by representing the general nature of the whole moral system, in some select parts of it, giving us a kind of a PICTURE of the whole, in miniature, to lead us to some right notions of the nature of the whole.

It is certain, that as all God's works are uniform, amidst all their infinite variety, so it has been his method, in his lesser works in the moral world, designedly to give a faint image of his greater, and hereby prepare the way for their being more easily understood. So the redemption of Israel out of Egypt was designed as a shadow of our spiritual redemption by Christ; and the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, was designed as a resemblance of the deliverance of the Christian church out of mystical Babylon. And there are almost innumerable instances of the like nature in scripture. Yea, the whole Jewish dispensation was evidently designed to be emblematical. So, indeed, was every thing in the natural world, from which metaphors and allusions are constantly brought, by Christ and his apostles, to represent and illustrate spiritual and divine things, as well as from the Jewish dispensation. And indeed, this was workman-like, and becoming the infinite wisdom of the great CONTRIVER and FORMER of all things, to whom all his works were known from the beginning, and who designed this lower world as the grand stage of action for moral agents, so to order things in all his works, and in all his dispensations, as, that one thing should give light to another; things in the natural world, to things in the moral; things in the Jewish dispensation, to things in the Christian.

It would, therefore, be perfectly analagous to the rest of God's works, if he had designed some eminent parts of his grand plan of moral government to contain, in miniature, the

nature of the whole, and contrived them to represent, and suited them to point out to us the wisdom and beauty of his grand and glorious scheme, which is too large for our present comprehension; and too difficult to be understood, but by the help of little pictures, where the whole is contained in miniature.

5. Yea, we may venture to affirm, that of necessity it must be the case, that the nature of the parts will certainly show the nature of the whole, in a moral system, under the government of him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. For while he constantly acts like himself, his whole conduct will be of a piece, always like itself; and so one part of it will illustrate the nature of another; and so, from the knowledge of the nature of various parts, we may certainly argue to the nature of the whole. As, let us but diligently observe a wise and good man, who is uniform and steady in his ways; and, from repeated instances of his conduct, we shall enter into the knowledge of his temper in general, and perceive the views and designs which govern him. So, let us but attend to the divine conduct, as recorded in that book, which may justly be denominated the history of the Deity, and enter into his views and designs, in particular instances of his conduct, as there intimated; and we may, with sufficient certainty, determine his moral character, and the general nature and design of his whole plan.

Show me, therefore, his views and designs in suffering Joseph to be sold; Israel to be oppressed; Pharaoh to harden his heart; Israel to murmur and rebel, and fall in the wilderness; and let me into the wisdom of his conduct, in these particular parts of his grand scheme, and then assure me that the whole system is governed by the same infinitely wise Being; and how can I doubt the wisdom of the whole, while I behold the wisdom of these particular parts? Or how can I be at a loss for the general nature of the whole, while I behold the nature of these particular parts, and firmly believe that God always acts like himself, and keeps up a constant uniformity through all the infinite varieties of cases and circumstances, that ever occur in his moral government of the world?

6. If, therefore, the plan which infinite wisdom contrived, to bring Jacob's family into Egypt, and from thence through the Red sea and wilderness into Canaan, in which so much sin was permitted, and so much misery endured, was, all things considered, the wisest and best; as being so exactly suited to set all the perfections of God in the fullest and strongest point of light, and at the same time to unmask their hearts, and set their absolute dependance on God, and great obligations to him, and the infinite evil of sin, in such a light, as had the most powerful tendency to induce them, with penitent, humble, broken hearts, in an entire self-diffidence, to put their trust only in God, and be wholly devoted to him; to fear him, and love him, and walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands, seeking his glory: I say, if that plan was the wisest that could have been contrived to answer these ends, and so the best suited to promote the glory of God, and the best good of the Israelites, and to answer many noble ends in that age, and in all succeeding generations; such, no doubt, must be the whole of God's moral government of the world; in which immensely great plan so much sin is permitted, and so much misery endured: i. e. it must be the best contrived scheme possible, to advance the glory of God, and the best good of the moral system.

I am sensible there are many objections which will be apt to arise in the reader's mind, and which are capable of being put into a very plausible dress, and which, at first sight, may seem to appear quite unanswerable. Nor am I unwilling they should be set in their strongest light. It is best to look on all sides, and that with the utmost care and impartiality. And every honest reader, who sincerely desires to know the truth; to understand the reasons of the divine conduct, and to see the wisdom, glory, and beauty of his universal plan, will be naturally disposed to look up to heaven, and say, "O, thou father of lights, thou fountain of all knowledge, sensible that we lack wisdom, and encouraged by thy gracious invitation, we come to thee, who givest liberally to all that ask, nor upbraidest, nor deniest the most unworthy, who ask in the name of Christ; open thou our eyes, that we may see the wisdom of thy government, and behold the beauty of thy con-

duct, that we may not only justify thy ways to men, but still, more than ever, love and fear that fearful and glorious name of thine, the LORD our GOD!" For there is not one point, in natural or revealed religion, attended with so great difficulties as THIS: therefore, we greatly need to have our hearts purified, and our minds enlightened by divine grace, that, with a good taste, and an unbiassed judgment, we may search into the hidden mysteries of God's great and eternal kingdom.

The objections are as follow:

1. "How could it be for the honour of the supreme Lord and Governor of the universe, to suffer satan, his enemy, by his lies, to deceive, seduce, and persuade innocent man to rebel against his sacred Majesty, and subject himself and all his race to death and ruin?"

2. "How could it be to the best good of the moral system, that this lower world, instead of being inhabited by a race of incarnate angels, ever celebrating the praises of their great Creator, perfectly happy in his image and favour, should sink down into so near a resemblance to hell, in wickedness and wo? O how infinitely better would it have been, if, instead of sin and misery here, and eternal pains of hell hereafter, to be suffered by such innumerable multitudes, all had been for ever holy and happy!"

3. "How can it be made to appear, that sin and misery were at all needful, much less absolutely necessary, in a system originally holy and happy, to answer any valuable ends? Would it not be to limit the holy ONE of Israel, to say, that he could find out no other way so good as this to exalt God, and render the system holy and happy?"

Besides,

4. "If God wills sin, then it seems sin is agreeable to his will. And if, from all eternity, he decreed the misery of his creatures, then it seems their misery suits him. Both which, as is granted on all hands, are directly contrary to reason and to scripture."

Before we attempt a direct answer to these objections, let three or four things be premised.

1. Be it so, that God's permitting sin and misery to enter

into the world, appears to us ever so dark; yet this is no argument at all against the wisdom, glory, and beauty of the divine conduct, in this affair. For there have been instances of the divine conduct, in all appearance dark to perfection, which, in the result, have proved perfect in wisdom and beauty. When Jacob saw his son's coat all stained with blood, he had nothing but darkness and death before his eyes. "An evil beast," said he, "hath devoured him. Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces." Wherefore, he "rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, and mourned for his son, and refused to be comforted." Nor had he the least gleam of light, for above twenty years, in this dark affair. Yea, it grew darker, when Simeon was left bound in Egypt, never to be released, unless Benjamin went also. "Joseph is not," says he, "and Simeon is not. And ye will take Benjamin away! All these things are against me." So he spake, and so he thought; for so things appeared; but yet, afterwards, he viewed the whole plan in a very different light, as being contrived and brought about by infinite wisdom and goodness. And doubtless he was ready to say, "Never let me, a poor short-sighted creature, venture again to call in question the wisdom of the supreme Governor of the world, all whose ways are perfect. Remember it, O my soul, from this time forward. And, for the future, let me learn to do my duty, and cheerfully leave God to order all things as he pleases; firmly believing all his conduct to be wise, whether I can see through it or not."

And how dark to Moses, fled into the land of Midian to save his life, must the divine conduct appear, in suffering his brethren, the children of Israel, to be so cruelly used by Pharaoh! Nor had he the least gleam of light, in this dark affair, for forty years. Yet it afterwards appeared to be full of the wonderful wisdom of God, as we have before observed. And, no doubt, Moses saw it to his abundant satisfaction.

But as for the inhabitants of Egypt, when they heard that Pharaoh, their grand monarch, and all his hosts were drowned in the Red sea; and as for the Israelites, whose carcasses were doomed to fall in the wilderness; these dispensations were to them so dark, and they in such a temper, that it was near or quite impossible they should see the wisdom of God in

them. Nor was it strange they could not see. But this leads me to add,

2. That it is not at all strange that God's conduct, in the permission of sin, should appear exceeding dark to us, how wise, glorious, and beautiful soever it is in itself, and in the eyes of God. (1.) Because our views of God's grand plan are so very imperfect. When God has finished his scheme, all holy beings will easily see the beauty of it; for then it will appear what he had in view, and how wisely every thing was ordered to answer the noblest and best ends. It was easy, when Jacob beheld Joseph governor over all the land of Egypt, for him to see through an affair, which before, for a long course of years, had been absolutely inexplicable. Besides, (2.) It is not strange that God's present plan of government appears so dark to us, however divine and glorious it is in itself, considering how ill a taste we have. It is not to be expected that fallen creatures, greatly alienated from the Deity, and of a temper quite contrary to his, should be suited with his plan of government. If wicked men are enemies to God, and enemies to his law, as the Scriptures teach*, they are not in a capacity to discern a plan all over divine. It was not strange that the Egyptians could not see the wisdom of God in the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts. Nor was it strange that the wicked Israelites were so far from seeing the wisdom of God, in dooming their carcasses to fall in the wilderness, that they were rather disposed to blaspheme his name. Yea, they began their blasphemy before they received their doom. And when they might have gone right on to Canaan, had it not been their own fault, they began to say, that God had brought them out of Egypt on purpose to destroy them†: just as some desperate sinners, who are deaf to all the calls of the gospel, and refuse to march for the heavenly Canaan, sometimes, in fits of horror, are ready to think that God made them on purpose to damn them. It is easy for us to see the unreasonableness and perverseness of the children of Israel; and impenitent, obstinate sinners are evidently quite as much to blame: but you cannot make them see it; nor could Moses

* Romans viii. 7. † Numbers xiv.

make the Israelites see it in their case. Nor is it to be expected that creatures, so far sunk into depravity and guilt, will be disposed to justify God and his ways, although all his dispensations are ever so wise and just. But then their dislike to the divine government, be it ever so great, is no sign but that it is perfectly wise, holy, just, and good. Moses thought not the less honourably of God's conduct in the overthrow of Pharaoh, because it looked so dark to the Egyptians. Nor do the inhabitants of heaven think the less honourably of God's conduct in the permission and punishment of sin, in general, because it looks so dark to obstinate sinners. God has given us an instance:

About 168 years before the Babylonish captivity, after the Israelites had been in the promised land 693 years, and, by their perverseness, had wore out God's patience, so that God was provoked to give them up to their hearts' lusts, Isaiah was sent with this awful message to them: "Go and tell the people, hear ye, indeed, but understand not: see ye, indeed, but perceive not: make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes," &c. "Then," said I, "Lord, how long?" And he answered, "until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate*." Than which nothing could look more dark to the guilty Jews, thus doomed to destruction. Yet, to the inhabitants of heaven, God's conduct, in all this, appeared to be unutterably glorious: so that, upon the occasion, they even "cried," as under the deepest impressions, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." So again, in the 19th chapter of the Revelations, we have the heavenly hosts represented as in the highest ecstasy of joy, on occasion of the destruction of mystical Babylon; which, yet, no doubt, when it comes to pass, will appear inexpressibly dark and glorious to the POPE, and his party; although the poor persecuted saints in Popish countries will be ready to join the heavenly hosts in their songs of praise. Yea,

3. When I think over former dispensations of Providence;

* Isaiah vi.

Joseph's affair, and how dark it appeared to Jacob; the case of the Israelites in sore bondage in Egypt, and how dark it appeared to Moses, fled into Midian; and that this Jacob and this Moses were the best of men, and the favourites of heaven; and yet the divine conduct to them was absolutely unaccountable: and as I look along through the bible, I can think of other instances of the like nature, one after another, till I come to the crucifixion of Christ; the most horrid sin that ever was committed: an affair exceeding dark to the disciples, the best of men then in the world, and who were even ready, things looked so dark, to give up all hopes of his being the Messiah. I say, when I consider these, I cannot but conclude, that if the most holy and knowing men on earth were entirely unable to solve the forementioned difficulties, relative to the permission of sin, yet it would be no just inducement to doubt of the divine wisdom. Yea,

4. However dark the affair appears, or however unanswerable the objections may seem to be, yet we have strict demonstration that, of all possible plans, this is the best; for, before the foundation of the world, it was at God's election to create, or not to create. And of all possible systems, he had his choice: nor was there any thing to bias his judgment; nor was it possible he should make a mistake; all things were open and naked before him; he knew which was the best; and he chose this: and, therefore, this, to him, appeared preferable to any other; and, therefore, it was really the best.

And what, then, if we are not able fully to solve the difficulties? Is it not altogether reasonable to conclude, that it is owing to our not seeing the whole plan, or to our want of a good taste, or both? It is certain, that we are very far from a full view of the whole plan. We came into existence, as it were, but yesterday. We are just emerging out of nonentity: we still border on non-existence; we are but half awake, if so much. When we enter into the eternal world, if this short period is well spent, we may hope to have our intellectual powers quite awake, and to be in a better capacity to search into the nature, and discern the beauties of God's eternal kingdom. And besides the narrowness of our present views, our taste, too, is at present much vitiated. The best of

us up to a sense of his all-sufficiency, and bring us to live wholly upon him, as children upon a father, and to be wholly devoted to him." Thus might they have thought. And instead of murmuring at every new difficulty, and then falling under the frowns of the Almighty, they might have spent their whole time in prayer and praise, till they arrived at Mount Sinai, and while they were setting up the tabernacle, and while the spies were gone to search out the land. And had they done so; had they been of such a temper, and spent their time thus, those 14 or 15 months, all in prayer and praise, the whole congregation would have been prepared to have disregarded the ten spies, and cheerfully to have joined with Caleb and Joshua, saying, "If the Lord is with us, there is no danger. Have not we all seen what he did in Egypt, at the Red sea, and since? And he that has done these things cannot want power or willingness to do what remains, unless, by our unbelief and perverseness, we should provoke him to cast us off." And so they might have marched right on to Canaan, driven out the inhabitants, and taken possession. But they were of a temper every way the reverse; and they acted as they felt: and it happened to them accordingly. Their carcasses were doomed to fall in the wilderness: they behaved like wild bulls in a net upon the occasion: blasphemed God; stormed at Moses: till God was obliged to strike them dead by hundreds, and by thousands, from time to time, before he could subdue them.

Now "they were our ensamples, and these things were written for our instruction*." Let us take heed, therefore, that we do not murmur at the divine conduct in the government of the world, as they did. Nor venture blasphemously to say, "he has brought us out of Egypt into this wilderness on purpose to destroy us. He has suffered mankind to fall into a state of sin and misery, that he might delight himself in the eternal torments of the damned." Whereas, the Israelites would not have fallen in the wilderness, had they not perversely despised the good land, which flowed with milk and honey; and refused to give credit to the revelation they had of God's readiness to lead them into Canaan. [And let it be

* 1 Cor. x. 2.

remembered that it was not God's decree, but their own dearly beloved lusts and corruptions, which influenced them to conduct as they did.] Nor shall we ever be sentenced to hell, unless we despise the glories of heaven, and prefer the leeks and onions of Egypt; the pleasures of sin and of this world; and so turn our backs upon God, and refuse to give credit to the revelation made to us in the gospel of God's readiness to be reconciled through Christ, and to grant us his Holy Spirit to lead us on to the heavenly Canaan; and refuse to comply with the gospel-way of life. And if we do act thus wickedly, it is as reasonable we should perish, as it was that the carcasses of the wicked Israelites should fall in the wilderness. And as their carcasses falling in the wilderness was over-ruled by infinite wisdom, for the general good of that community, and to fill the whole earth with his glory; so will the righteous punishment of the wicked eternally in hell be over-ruled to the good of the intelligent system, and God will be exalted throughout all his dominions. Read Revelations xix. 1. 6.

The wicked Israelites did not feel themselves to blame, to be sure, not much to blame, for all their murmurings and rebellions. "Who among mortals," they were ready to say, "would conduct otherwise than we do, under the like circumstances! We were always against leaving Egypt, and entering on so wild an expedition. God has contrived it on purpose for our destruction! Fools that we were, ever to leave the flesh-pots of Egypt! Would to God we had lived and died there! This had been our highest interest. Therefore, let us make a captain, and return, and make our peace with the Egyptians as well as we can, and submit to our bondage for ever." When, therefore, the judgments of God came upon them in such a manner, they would naturally be so far from seeing the justice or wisdom of the divine conduct, that their hearts would be full of blasphemous thoughts against God and Moses; and the whole divine conduct would appear dark and unaccountable, to the highest degree. And in all this they show the very spirit of unhumbled, obstinate sinners, who are insensible of their sin and guilt, and desert of eternal damnation, and are ready to say, "God brought us

into being on purpose to damn us: we had no hand in it! we would not have chose it: would to God we had never been born! Oh that we could return to non-existence! that would be our true interest;" and instead of seeing the wisdom and justice of God, in his dispensations towards them, they are full of blasphemous thoughts, and the whole of the divine conduct appears to them dark and unaccountable, to the highest degree.

Had the Israelites been thoroughly sensible how hateful their Egyptian temper, their carnal disposition, their infidelity, and their continual murmurings were, and how much to blame they appeared in the sight of God, the justice of the divine conduct would by them have been easily seen; and that would have prepared them to have seen the wisdom of his ways too. "It is fit such wretches as we should be shut out of the promised land, and our carcasses should fall in this wilderness; and righteous art thou, O Lord, in our doom. We have but our just deserts. No wonder the earth swallows up such monsters, and that thousands are struck dead in a moment, who are guilty of such crimes. The honour of divine Majesty requires this severity; and even the good of our posterity makes it necessary." Thus would they have thought. Nor can unhumbled, obstinate sinners, ever discern the wisdom and beauty of the divine government in general, until first their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they cordially approve of the justice of God's law, by which they stand condemned; and are "born again;" as it is written, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." For it is the "pure in heart," and they only, that "shall SEE God;" for "the natural man," who is destitute of a spiritual holy, divine taste, "discerneth not the things of the spirit of God;" seeth not the divine beauty of the law or of the gospel, and, for the same reason, is blind to the wisdom, glory, and beauty of God's universal plan; so very blind, that the full and clear revelation to be made of it at the day of judgment, how convincing soever it may be to their reason and conscience, will be far from suiting their hearts. Nor will the beauty and amiableness of it be by them ever discerned; for, as the obstinate Israelites, whose carcasses fell in the wil-

derness, never saw the beauty of God's conduct towards that congregation, so neither will those, who die impenitent, ever see the beauty and glory of God's universal plan. But in heaven it will be seen.

To conclude. As all the hard thoughts of the divine conduct, which are to be found in the hearts of mankind, through a fallen, depraved, guilty world, arise entirely from our partial views and bad taste; so there is no other remedy, but, first of all, to have our hearts renewed and sanctified by divine grace; and then to endeavour to enlarge our views of God's universal plan, and search into the nature of the divine government, and the glorious designs and noble ends which infinite wisdom has in view, and will at last accomplish.

And as the BIBLE contains an authentic history of the conduct of the Deity, for a long series of many hundred years; and, by prophetic representations, opens to our view things yet to come to pass, as far down as to the end of the world, and the general judgment, and the consummation of all things; so hither should we come, with honest minds and pure hearts, and form all our notions of God's moral perfections; the nature of his moral government, and of his views, ends, and designs, in all his works, from what we find here written. Nor ought any solutions of difficulties to be accounted right, but such as quadrate exactly with, yea, are the natural result of, scripture representations.

Some of the heathen philosophers, who knew no better, imagined there were two Gods. A good God, the author of all good in the system, whom they called OROMASDES: and an evil God, the author of all evil in the system, whom they called ARIMANIUS. But it is enough for us to confute this hypothesis, that the BIBLE teaches us that there is but ONE GOD, and that he is absolutely supreme, and does according to his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and that his providence extends to every thing, both good and bad. And it is supposed that those remarkable words, in Isai. xlv. 6, 7. directed to Cyrus, king of Persia, where the forementioned notion of two Gods anciently prevailed, were designed in express contradiction to that doctrine. "I am the LORD, and there is none else; I

form light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I, the LORD, do all these things."

Some, who profess to adhere to divine revelation, in order to solve the difficulties relative to God's permission of sin, affirm, it came to pass unexpectedly to the divine Being; as he was not capable of foreseeing what would be the conduct of free agents. But it is enough for us, to confute this hypothesis, that we have hundreds of instances in scripture of God's foreknowledge of the conduct of free agents, and that it is a doctrine constantly taught and inculcated in the bible*.

Others, to solve the difficulties, have asserted that it was not in the power of God to prevent the fall of free agents, without destroying their free agency, and turning them into intelligent machines, incapable of virtue as well as of vice. But it is enough for us, to confute this hypothesis, that it is contrary to plain scripture representations, which teach us, that the man, Christ Jesus, our second Adam, was a free agent, capable of the highest virtue, and yet in a confirmed state, so that he could not sin; as are also all the saints and angels now in heaven. From whence it appears, that it was in God's power to have confirmed all intelligences at first; and left them moral agents notwithstanding.

Others, to solve the difficulties still more fully, have not only asserted as above, but also denied the eternity of hell-torments, and affirmed the universal salvation of men and devils. But it is enough for us, to confute this hypothesis, that, instead of it being taught in scripture, it is contrary to what those infallible writings affirm, in language as plain, and express, and repeated, as could have been expected, if God had intended to establish us ever so fully in the belief of the eternity of hell-torments. Of which more afterwards.

But it will be said, "If God certainly foreknew that man would fall, unless he interposed and undertook for their safety; and if it was in his power to have done it; and if millions would be eternally miserable in hell if he did not, why did not he interpose and undertake?" Not, I dare say, for want of forethought, or of a thorough weighing of the affair, with all

* See this proved at large in Mr. Edwards on Liberty, pages 98—116.

its consequences; for he had the whole in full view, from eternal ages. Nor will any pretend it was absolutely without any end at all; for an infinitely wise Being acts always upon design.

"Now, God, of his infinite mercy, grant, that by a diligent attention to the divine oracles, and through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, we may come to such an understanding of this dispensation of his providence, as may tend to create in us the greatest dread of sin, and the highest veneration for the divine majesty; and show us our entire, absolute dependance on God, and infinite obligations to him; that we may learn to be perfectly self-diffident; to trust wholly in God, and live wholly to him, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory in the church, world without end." AMEN.

THE WISDOM OF GOD

IN

THE PERMISSION OF SIN.

SERMON III.

GENESIS l. 20.

Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good.

WERE the supreme Monarch of the universe, an arbitrary, despotic being, conducting without any regard to what is fitting and best, having no reason or motive for what he doth, nor any end in view, all our inquiries and researches into the wisdom of God, in the permission of sin, must be for ever in vain. If he makes his will his only rule of action, and wills as he does without any reason or motive, a stop, an eternal stop, ought to be put to all inquiries: for no reason is to be sought for a thing which is done absolutely, without any reason at all. But if the supreme monarch of the universe is a Being of infinite wisdom, and always chooses what is best, and does what is most fitting, working all things *according to the* COUNSEL *of his own will,* (Eph. i. 11.) then his universal plan must be, yea, we may be quite certain that it actually is, perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty. And now it becomes us to awaken all the powers of our souls to attention; and it is worth our while to dwell whole days, and months, and years, on this greatest and noblest of all themes. And if we feel that the immense greatness of the plan confounds us, and find ourselves still at a loss, yet being assured the whole is perfect in beauty, we will look into it as far as we can; and hasten to prepare for the world of light above, where the glories of this grand scheme will open to our view, and afford matter of the sweetest contemplation, and most divine delight, through eternal ages. Since we are but just emerged out of non-exist-

ence; have so very small an acquaintance with God's world, and so feeble and weak a taste; so poor a discernment of what is most beautiful and best, it must not seem strange to us if we can see but a little way into the glories of the divine plan. Yet, knowing that it is so very exceeding glorious, being chosen by infinite wisdom before all other possible plans, although infinite in number and variety, in the view of omniscience, we may ardently long to look into it, and search the scriptures daily; study the nature of the Deity, and lift up our eyes to heaven for divine light and instruction.

All that hath been said in the foregoing sermons being kept in mind, that we may now enter directly into a view of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, and lay a foundation for the solution of all objections, we must look back to the beginning of God's works, and view his conduct, from step to step, and inquire into the reasons of each as we go along. And God grant us attentive minds, and right and enlarged views, and a good taste to discern the beauty and glory of his universal plan! And let us begin as the Bible begins; for that best of books is to be our constant guide; the man of our counsel; a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths, in all the way we go.

1. A grand and noble THEATRE was erected by GOD; a standing, visible evidence of his eternal power and Godhead; completely furnished out, as a place of habitation for man; and as the grand stage of action and scene of all God's wonderful works, till the day of judgment. What use is to be made of the material system, after the day of judgment, shall be considered in its place.

When we read the first verse in Genesis, "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,*" with what follows in that chapter, we behold the whole material system arising out of nothing into being, by God's almighty power. First it exists a CHAOS, *without form and void,* buried in profound darkness; but in six days, the whole is set in a most harmonious and beautiful order; a visible and noble specimen of the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of the GREAT ETERNAL. And how know we but that the intellectual system, reduced to so near a resemblance of a *chaos,* by the revolt and prevailing influence of the *angels who left their first estate,* will yet.

under the conduct of infinite wisdom, even under the conduct of *Messiah the prince*, stand forth in perfect order, and the most beautiful harmony; a bright and noble image of all the glorious perfections of the *invisible God*?

A theatre being erected, proper to raise, in intelligent creatures, sublime and exalted thoughts of God, in the next place MAN, a noble creature, an intelligent free agent, capable of moral action, and a proper subject of moral government, is formed by God, and placed upon the stage, as head of a numerous race, and made lord of this lower world. "God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the face of the earth." *Gen.* i. 27, 28.

And here it ought to be observed, and it ought never to be forgotten by us, that God, in the capacity of *Creator, did well* by his creature, man. He was made capable of knowing, loving, obeying, and enjoying God; as also of seeing the beauty and tasting the sweetness of the fruits of paradise; and he had a high relish for knowledge and happiness. Besides, he was formed for society, and had an agreeable companion, and the prospect of a happy posterity, who would grow up and honour and love him as their common father, through all generations. And he had open to his view all the glories of the visible creation, to inspire him with sublime and exalted thoughts of God, who had brought him into existence, and made him lord of all here below. Surely, God the Creator, *dealt well* by his creature, man, whom he thus made but a little lower than the angels, and crowned with glory and honour. "And God saw every thing that he made, and, behold, it was very good." *Gen.* i. 31.

And, therefore,

3. Man was under the greatest obligations to love the infinitely glorious God, his Maker, with all his heart, and to be for ever in subjection to his authority, and obedient to his will. And this was not only his duty, but such was his make, that it would

have afforded him the most refined pleasure and delight: therefore, let it be repeated again, that *God, his Creator, had done well by his creature, man**. And if, after all this, he should fall from God, it must be his own fault; nor could he any longer deserve the favour of his Maker, but to sink under his everlasting displeasure. Therefore,

Of course his everlasting welfare must depend on his good behaviour; and had there been no covenant or constitution at all, only the mere law of nature; yet, according to that, it would have become the *most High*, as moral governor and judge of the world, in case of the rebellion of his creature, man, to have testified his high displeasure against his crime, in his everlasting destruction: *for the wages of sin is death.* The honour of the Deity would have called for such a punishment, as well as the good of the intelligent system, that all might hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly. Wherefore, God, as the holy and good governor of the world, expressly assures his creature, man, what he might depend upon in case of disobedience. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." *Gen.* ii. 17.

And thus also God did *well* by his creature, man, in the capacity of his moral governor. He let him know his great obligations to obedience: how much he insisted upon it: how highly he should resent his disobedience. That he would cast him not only out of his favour, and out of paradise, but out of this world; would even put him to death, and send his guilty soul, under the divine displeasure, naked, forlorn, undone, to everlasting despair and wo; no hope being given of any relief. THOU SHALT SURELY DIE. And what more could God have done, as his moral governor, to have prevented his apostacy and ruin? If, after all this, he would venture to disobey, must he not be for ever inexcusable?

* *Question.* How was it possible for man, created in such holy and happy circumstances, ever to sin?

Answer. It is thought by some very difficult to answer this question. And had neither angels nor men ever sinned, perhaps it might have been thought an impossible thing, that they ever should have sinned. Which view of the case, I desire the reader to keep in mind, and meanwhile wait a little for a solution of the difficulty proposed.

4. God took it for granted that he had now done enough, and said enough; and might, becoming his character, as his Lord and King, not only demand, but reasonably expect, obedience, and justly suspend his everlasting welfare on that condition. Yea, he judged that, as governor of the world, it became him to do so, that he might secure his own rights, and maintain the honour of his authority. Nor did he look upon himself obliged to be his keeper, and become surety for him, and undertake to preserve him from sin, by his constant interposition; but judged he might, having done enough, and said enough, now leave him to his own choice, as having all needful qualifications to render him a proper subject of moral government; having sufficient internal abilities and sufficient outward advantages to know and do his duty. And, accordingly, God did leave him to his choice. He was deceived by satan's lies; broke the divine law, and fell into ruin; as the event recorded in the 3d chapter of Genesis sufficiently proves. But God and his throne were guiltless.

5. Our first parents' design, in eating of the forbidden fruit, was to make a surprising advance in knowledge and happiness; not by such slow degress as they had before expected, but at once to *become as Gods.* Deceived by satan's lies; captivated by this temptation; the food also appearing pleasant to the eye, and good for food, they took and eat.

Satan's design was to bring dishonour upon God, ruin upon man, and then to lift up himself, exult, and triumph in his deed. Being an inveterate enemy to God, and to all good; and having a peculiar spite at man*, nothing could give him greater joy, than to ruin a new made world, which, as it ap-

* The angels are appointed ministering spirits, to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation, (Heb. i. 14.) And, perhaps, as soon as man was created, it was revealed to all the hosts of heaven, that it should be their employment, to attend upon Adam and his numerous race. Perhaps satan might think this too degrading, for one so superior to man, as he perceived himself to be, to be thus employed. And so, pride, his first sin, might take occasion to rise in his heart. And to be revenged on God and man, both at once, he laid a scheme for man's seduction and ruin. And, from that day to this, hath never ceased to study our mischief. If this occasion of the fall of angels is a mere conjecture, yet it is the most probable I know of. And what makes it the more probable, it will account for satan's great zeal for the destruction of mankind.

peared to him, God had created for the honour of his great name, and as a place of happy abode for his creature, man; to see God's creature give more credit to him than to his Maker; to see God's subject desert his rightful Sovereign and Lord, and join with him; to see God's authority disregarded, and himself obeyed: I say, to see God thus disobeyed, disappointed, dishonoured, man ruined; this lower creation spoiled, while he himself is believed, obeyed, honoured, would perfectly suit the devil's heart, so full of pride, of enmity against God, and ill-will to man.

God's design in permitting satan so far to succeed in this most hellish attempt, was, that he might take occasion to bring more honour to God, and to make the good part of the creation more humble, holy, and happy. And, finally, as effectually to disappoint satan in all his schemes, as was Pharaoh, when he and his army lay overwhelmed in the Red sea: which design, for the encouragement of our first parents, was hinted to them soon after the fall. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." *Gen.* iii. 15.

When the great OMNISCIENT saw that rebellion would break out in heaven, and the infection reach down to this lower world, and spread all over the earth, be practically said, "After all I have done for them as their Creator, and said to them as their moral governor, I and my throne are guiltless; to themselves I leave them; and now will it be known what is in their hearts; and I also will take occasion to show what is in my heart; and they *shall know that I am the* LORD, and the whole intelligent system shall *be filled with my glory.*" (Analagous to what is written in 2 *Chron.* xxxii. 31. *Deut.* viii. 2. *Exod.* x. 2.)

1. God knew that it belonged to the nature of all finite beings to be mutable and peaceable; and that the best might degenerate so far as to become the worst: no being in the system being, by nature, immutable, but God alone. As it is written, "I am the LORD, I change not." *Mal.* iii. 6.

To be, by nature, immutable, is peculiar to the Deity, and cannot be communicated to a creature, because it implies infinity. God only is capable of such a complete view of all things, past, present, and to come, at once, as leaves no room

for any new views. And his views being for ever exactly the same, there is in his nature a fixed foundation for immutability in all his purposes and determinations. Whereas, the most exalted of all finite beings, being capable of only partial views of things, are constantly enlarging and varying their views and prospects, and are liable to have a set of thoughts wholly new, which may lead on to new determinations and purposes. And amidst an infinite variety of new views and new determinations, things may possibly so appear, as that the most exalted of mere creatures may make a wrong judgment, and take a wrong turn, and so fall into sin, and under the divine displeasure.

Wherefore, to God, who saw the finite capacities of finite intelligences, and their consequent liableness, as things might happen, to deception and apostacy, it plainly appeared, that he could not safely depend upon their stability. He knew himself to be the only immutable being in the system; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; but "he put no trust in his servants, and his angels he charged with folly;" (*Job* iv. 18.) or, as it is elsewhere expressed, (*Job* xv. 15.) "He putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight."

And yet, for things to continue for ever in such an uncertain, unsettled state, must have been undesirable to the immutable Being who loves immutability in himself, and the image of it in his creatures; and loves to see his authority established, and his kingdom settled in peace and everlasting order and harmony; and loves to see the eternal welfare of his creatures on a safe footing, and clear out of the reach of any possible danger.

But how much soever to the honour of God, and to the good of the system, and how desirable soever, in these two respects, it might appear in the sight of God, that the intelligent system should unanimously adhere and cleave for ever to the Lord, yet, in the nature of things, there could be no certain security for this, unless he himself, the only immutable Being, should undertake and become surety for all his creatures. There could be no certain dependence upon creatures, left to themselves, how great and excellent soever their

original powers, because, after all, they were finite; and, therefore, must have new views, and so were liable to wrong determinations. God, who was perfectly acquainted with the nature of himself, and of all created beings, plainly saw that himself alone was, by nature, absolutely immutable, and that all created intelligences must, after all their noble endowments and exalted stations, be absolutely dependent on him, not only for the continuation of their beings and original powers, but also for their preservation from sin and apostacy. As it is written, "There is none good but one, that is God." *Mark* x. 18.

2. However, innocent, holy beings, who as yet never felt the least inclination to swerve from God, but, on the contrary, were entirely wrapt up in him, could not easily perceive how it should be possible for them to turn away from the Deity, and become apostate. Yea, such a thing would naturally appear to be impossible, as they felt no inclination that way, nor had in view any thing which seemed to be of the nature of a temptation to it. Nor was it possible they should feel an inclination to sin, while innocent; for the least motion of their hearts towards sin would constitute them sinners in the eyes of perfect purity. Nor was it possible they should feel any force in any temptation to sin, unless the temptation excited in them some inclination that way; for if they felt no inclination that way, then the temptation would appear to have no weight in it. If it weighed nothing with them, it would appear to have no weight in itself. So that, as long as they remained innocent, they could neither feel any inclination to sin, nor perceive any force in any temptation. Wherefore, it must be very unnatural to an innocent, holy being, to apprehend any danger of his ever turning from God. Nor could he easily be brought to know the mutability of his nature, or ever to imagine it could be in his heart to sin against God, unless left to find out the truth by his own sad experience.

Let any man attend to the constitution of his own mind, and he will soon perceive how unnatural it is to think ourselves in danger of a crime to which we never felt the least

inclination, nor ever once thought of any thing in nature that could be a temptation; yea, to which, whenever we think of it, we feel the greatest aversion: as, what dutiful child ever thought himself in danger of murdering his father, whom he greatly loves and honours? And if a divinely-inspired propeht should tell him that he, one day, should be guilty of such a shocking crime, he could hardly believe it. This naturally brings to mind the story of *Hazael*, (in 2 *Kings*, viii. 11. 13.) who, when the prophet told him how he should *burn the strong holds of Israel, slay their young men with the sword, and dash their children, and rip up their women with child*, having never felt any inclination to such barbarities toward them, and not foreseeing any temptation he should ever have to commit such things, so shocking to human nature, readily answered, *Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing!* So, when our blessed Saviour told Peter that he should *deny him that very night*, he was far from thinking it was in his heart to do so. Nor could the prediction of Christ induce him to believe that it would come to pass. Yea, it did not seem to him there was really any danger of it, as he had no inclination that way; yea, felt the greatest aversion to it; and it did not seem that any thing could tempt him to it: no, not even death itself; for he felt he had rather die than to do it. *Mark* xiv. 29. "Although all should be offended, yet will not I." *Ver.* 31. "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise." And this was the voice of them all, though Christ had expressly told them, *All ye shall be offended because of me this night*; and even confirmed his prediction by an ancient prophecy. "For it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." *Ver.* 27. Much less would innocent, holy beings, who had never heard that any one intelligence had ever fallen, or ever discerned any thing in the state of their minds within, or in the situation of things without, that had the least tendency that way, but every thing to the contrary: I say, much less would such beings be apt to suspect any danger of their forsaking the fountain of all good, and turning enemies to the God that made them. Nay, rather, I imagine, they would be apt to

look upon it as a thing, in its own nature, near or quite impossible*. Therefore,

3. If God, in a sense of their mutability, out of his own mere goodness and sovereign grace, to prevent their apostacy, and the infinitely dreadful consequences which, in a government so perfectly holy as his, sin must expose them to, all which lay open to his view: I say, if God had become surety for all intelligences; if the only immutable Being had, in such circumstances, undertaken, by his ever-watchful eye, and the constant influences of his spirit, to have rendered all intelligences immutably good; although the kindness done them, in God's account, had been full infinitely great, yet not so in their's; for they would not have been in a capacity to have discerned the kindness scarce at all; much less to have been so thoroughly sensible of their absolute dependance on God, and infinite obligations to him, as now, according to the present plan, the saved will for ever be.

Had all intelligences been preserved in their original rectitude, and so never felt in themselves the least inclination to sin, but always perfectly to the contrary, they would have been apt to have thought it impossible that any holy being should ever depart from God; and so would not have been apt to have attributed their immutability to God, their preserver, but rather to their own inherent goodness; and so their absolute dependance on God, the only immutable Being, and their infinite obligations to him, for interposing to prevent their apostacy, would not have been seen. Nor could

* Obj. "The Disciples were guilty of self-confidence, and were to blame. Surely holy beings have no blameable self-confidence."

Ans. They have not. The Disciples might have known better. They had heard of the angels' fall, of Adam's fall, and of the falls of Noah, Lot, David, and other most eminent men; and had had abundant experience of the wickedness and deceitfulness of their own hearts, all which, together with Christ's express prediction, rendered them to blame. Yet it will not follow, that an innocent, holy being, just come into existence, full of love to God, having never heard of the fall of any, nor ever thought of any temptation to sin, is to blame, because it seems to him impossible, that ever he should turn enemy to the God that made him, or once go contrary to his will. "How can I do it?" would he be ready to say. "In all nature there is nothing to tempt me. But every thing to the contrary." And the more he loved God, the more impossible would it seem, that he should ever revolt.

they have had any proper sense of the self-moving goodness and sovereign grace of God, exercised towards them in this affair. In a word, God would not have been exalted so highly, nor would these intelligences have looked on themselves so infinitely beneath him: so dependant; so much obliged; nor would divine sovereign grace have stood in such a clear and striking point of light, as was really desirable. The truth would have lain, in a measure, concealed, beyond the reach of finite capacities, there being in nature no means provided, whereby they could have come to the clear and full knowledge of it. Therefore,

4. They were not fit to be confirmed; nor would it have been to the honour of God to have confirmed them, as things stood. They were not prepared to feel that they stood in need of this *super-creation*-grace, (if I may so call it,) not as yet knowing, nor, for aught appears, so much as suspecting, that they were in any danger. They stood firm within themselves, nor was there any thing in universal nature to draw them aside from God, as it seemed to them. And had God then interposed, it must have been to them an insensible interposition; of which they felt no need, and for which they were unprepared to be thankful.

If God had constantly preserved them from the first stirrings of an inclination to apostacy, as they had never heard of such a thing in all the system, or felt any tendency of heart that way, his interposition must have been undiscerned by them; nor could they have come to the knowledge of it, unless by immediate revelation from God; which, as the case stood, they were unprepared to understand, or attend to, as not feeling any need of it. A revelation, in such a situation, would not have produced the desired effects. Nothing could teach them like experience. And, indeed, this is evidently the case so universally, that it is even become a proverb, that *experience is the best school-master*; so that it seems plain that intelligences, as they were at first created, were not in proper circumstances to be confirmed: nor could God have confirmed them, with that honour to himself that was desirable and fit.

For, if God, the only immutable Being, of his own infinite goodness and sovereign grace, should show such a kindness to any of his creatures, it was fit and desirable that they

should be thoroughly sensible of the greatness and freeness of his grace. The kindness done to a mutable, peccable creature, in such a case, as to the matter of it, must be of infinite worth; it being a confirmation in everlasting happiness: And as the kindness in confirming a peccable creature must be infinitely great, so the grace must be absolutely free. God had done so much for all intelligences in their first creation, that he was under no obligations to do any more. He was absolutely at liberty. He looked upon it in this light. And had he, to what he had originally done for them as their Creator, superadded confirming grace, *i. e.* undertaken, as their guardian, to have been their constant keeper, and engaged his own immutability to have rendered them immutably good, the favour had been quite over and above what was due from the Creator to his creature; and so had been, in a peculiar sense, *free*. Now, for a favour, *infinitely great*, and so *absolutely free*, to be conferred in such a manner as that the *greatness* and *freeness* of it should never have been seen by intelligences, was neither for the honour of God, nor for the best good of his creatures. And,

5. It was but paying proper honour to the Deity, for God, as moral governor of the world, to take state to himself, and, in the sight of all created intelligences, to seat himself upon his throne, and proclaim his own infinite supremacy, and clothe himself with his proper authority, and let all know their infinite obligations to love, and honour, and obey him, on pain of his everlasting displeasure, and their everlasting banishment from his glorious presence. To have concerned himself only for his creatures' good, unsolicitous for the rights of the Godhead, in the very beginning of his reign, and when the first foundations of his everlasting kingdom were laying, had been to counteract his own nature and his chief maxims of government. And, indeed, as he is the GREAT BEING, and in a sense, the only being, all the creation being nothing compared with him, yea, less than nothing and vanity; so it was fit all intelligences should early be taught to view him in that light. And what method could be better suited to this end, than to let all the intelligent system know that their everlasting welfare was suspended on the condition

of their paying supreme honour, and yielding constant obedience to this glorious Monarch of the universe; in the mean time leaving them to their own reflections, and to their own choice; as being conscious to himself of their infinite obligations to yield everlasting obedience to his law?

And if, in this state of things, any of his creatures should venture to rise in rebellion against his glorious majesty, the way would be open for him to take such steps as would have the most effectual tendency to discountenance sin; to exalt God, to humble the sinner, and glorify grace; and to prepare the way for the confirmation of innumerable multitudes of intelligences, in holiness and happiness, to the best advantage. All his gracious plan lay open before him. He knew, from step to step, how intelligences would conduct, and how he himself would interpose and overrule, and how the whole would finally issue. And he practically said, "Now shall it be known what is in their hearts. And occasion shall be given to show what is in my heart. And it shall be known that I am the LORD. And the whole intelligent system shall be filled with my glory." And,

6. The state of things in the moral system was not such, immediately after the creation, as was suitable to the confirmation of intelligences in a way agreeable to the ends of moral government. God must have done all *immediately*, and *without their so much as discerning their need of it*; for there were, as yet, comparatively speaking, no means of confirmation. They had not had opportunity, in any instance, to see the infinitely evil nature and dreadful consequences of sin: Nor did it yet appear what infinite abhorrence the Almighty had of iniquity, by any thing he had *done*: Nor did they so much as know their danger, and their need of the divine interposition. Things, therefore, were by no means ripe for a general confirmation.

Indeed, God could have confirmed created intelligences then, but not in a way so agreeable to the ends of moral government as afterwards, *i. e.* not so much to the honour of the moral governor, and to the spiritual advantage of his creatures. When satan, a glorious arch-angel, revolted, and drew off a third part, (perhaps,) of the inhabitants of heaven;

and when, for their sin, they were driven out from the presence of God, down to an eternal hell; and when the elect angels had stood by, and, with a perfect astonishment, beheld this unexpected revolt of their companions; and, with sacred dread, seen divine wrath blaze out from the eternal throne of heaven's almighty monarch, driving the rebel host from those celestial regions, down to darkness and endless woes; and when the elect angels soon after saw our first parents turn away from God, and, for their sin, driven out of paradise, and all this lower world doomed to death; and when they had stood by 3 or 4000 years, and been spectators of the judgments inflicted by God on a wicked world; seen the general deluge; the miraculous destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, by fire from heaven; the ten plagues of Egypt; the overthrow of Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea; the carcasses of six hundred thousand Israelites fall in the wilderness, and the long series of calamities which God sent upon his people in the times of their judges, and in the reigns of their kings, till Israel and Judah were both carried away captive for their sins, and the glorious holy temple laid in ashes; and viewed all God's ways, even down to the birth and death of the MESSIAH, the most astonishing event that ever did, or ever will happen, throughout eternal ages; and beheld their sovereign Lord, who, in the beginning, had created the heaven and the earth, and whom, from their first existence, they had worshipped as the supreme God; as God over all blessed for ever, even him stepping into the room of apostate man, and dying in his stead, to make atonement for his sin: I say, when the elect angels had stood by, for 4000 years, and seen all these things, and had full time for consideration, their thoughts of God, of themselves, of sin, would be almost infinitely different from what they were immediately after their creation. And now, if God should see cause to confirm them, that they might never fall, it would appear to them a kindness infinitely great, and infinitely free. Their absolute dependance on God, and infinite obligations to him, and the infinite malignity of sin, would naturally be so deeply impressed on their hearts, by an attentive view of all these things, as would greatly tend to their

everlasting confirmation; and prepare them to receive, with suitable gratitude, a kindness of such infinite value, at the hands of God.

The fall of their companions in holiness and happiness, and then of innocent man, would naturally lead them to see their own mutability, and make them feel their need of being held up by him, who is alone, by nature, unchangeable, and bring them to an absolute dependance on him. God's permitting others to fall, as great and good as themselves, would naturally lead them to see that God was under no obligations to keep them through their time of trial, which would induce them to have recourse to sovereign grace, and be always on their watch. A sight of the infinitely dreadful state of satan and his host, once their fellow-citizens, now bound in chains of guilt and despair, to the judgment of the great day, then before all worlds to be brought forth, judged, condemned, and doomed to the most intolerable pains of hell, never to end, would naturally tend to realize to them the horrible wickedness and dreadful nature of rising in rebellion against God, and make them tremble at the thought. And while they beheld all God's conduct towards mankind, from the fall of Adam to the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ, and looked forward to the final conflagration and consummation of all things, it would give them such a view of all God's moral perfections, shining forth in his moral government of the world, and set the infinitely evil nature and dreadful consequences of sin in such a light, as would have the strongest tendency to confirm them in everlasting love and obedience to the supreme Being, and dispose them to receive, at God's hands, a promise of their everlasting establishment, with the utmost gratitude.

The angels, who stood, being no where in scripture denominated ELECT, until after the exaltation of Christ, some have thought they were held in a state of trial till then; when by their confirmation, God's eternal designs of love towards them were manifested. And it is certain, that when they had been spectators of all God's works in heaven, earth and hell, through so long a period, must be in almost an infinitely better capacity to receive confirmation than immediately after their creation: and their confirmation now would be infinite-

ly more to God's honour than if it had been granted at their first existence; and their own humility, holiness, and happiness, be increased an hundred, or a thousand, or perhaps ten thousand fold.

Therefore,

7. On supposition that a third part were fallen and lost, yet it is easy to see how there may be eternally more holiness and happiness in the angelic world, than if sin and misery had been for ever unknown: for if their holiness and happiness be only an hundred times greater now, on the present plan, than otherwise it would have been, and if we allow for the happiness satan and his adherents lost, and for the misery which they undergo, yet what remains must be many millions more in the whole, than it otherwise would have been*. And on-

* The truth of this may be easily seen, thus: Suppose the number of angels to be 3; and all remaining innocent to have one degree of holiness and happiness a-piece; the sum total would be 3 degrees of holiness and happiness. But if one falls, and the other two increase in holiness and happiness an hundred fold, then the sum total of holiness and happiness will be 200 degrees. But if the misery of the damned is augmented in the same proportion as the happiness of the blessed, then the misery of one lost angel will be 100 degrees; besides the happiness he lost, which was supposed to be 1 degree. Now, therefore, subtract 101 from 200, and the remainder will be 99; that is, there will be 99 degrees of happiness left. And if this will be the case, were the number of the angels supposed to be 3, it will also, proportionably, in any given number. So that, if there are but half so many good angels, as there are now supposed to be of mankind inhabiting the earth, yet the clear gain will be above 96 hundred millions of degrees of happiness more than if all had stood; as will appear from the following table.

N. B. The number of the present inhabitants of the earth is supposed to be 729 millions. I will suppose the number of good angels to be only 300 millions, which is less than half.

If all had stood.		On the present plan.	
Number of Angels supposed.	Proportionable degrees of HAPPINESS.	Number of Angels supposed.	Proportionable degrees of HAPPINESS.
3 - - - -	3 - - - -	3 - - - -	99 - - - -
30 - - - -	30 - - - -	30 - - - -	990 - - - -
300 - - - -	300 - - - -	300 - - - -	9900 - - - -
300 millions	300 millions	300 millions	9900 millions.

From 9900 millions
Subtract 300 millions

Remainder 9600 millions clear gain.

ly let us realize what must have been the reflections of the holy angels, from time to time, as new scenes have opened to their view, and what their reflections must eternally be, when they have seen God's grand plan finished at the day of judgment; and we cannot doubt but that their humility, holiness, and happiness, will be augmented at least an hundred fold.

1. Reflections of the elect angels on the unreasonable rebellion; the unexpected fall; the everlasting punishment of satan and his legions, once their companions in bliss.

"How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning! from standing near the throne of God, into an eternal hell! Yesterday joining with us in the songs of heaven; now under the everlasting displeasure of God, banished to endless wo!

"How durst you rise in rebellion against heaven's glorious monarch! And how infinitely vile the shocking deed! What more reasonable than to pay supreme honour to the supreme Being, and to be in subjection to the Author and Lord of all things, to whom the throne belongs, and exult in his supremacy, and rejoice in him, and in his government! Or what more vile and ungrateful, than to turn enemies to the great Being, the author, proprietor, and governor of all created intelligences, and to attempt to overturn all order and harmony in the system! For such exalted intelligences, in such a happy situation, under such great obligations to the Deity for bounties already received, attended with the prospect of endless joys in his presence, to rise in rebellion thus! No wonder heaven's almighty monarch, in regard to his own honour and the good of his kingdom, has banished them from his presence, and destined them to be everlasting monuments of his wrath.

"But, Oh, how unexpected, surprising, and shocking, are these dreadful scenes! And is it so? And are they fallen? Who could have thought it! Such holy beings to rise in rebellion against INFINITE HOLINESS! So good a taste for order and harmony, and yet have broke the orders of heaven! So strong inducements, from duty and interest, to persevere, that one would have thought such an apostacy quite impossible! And are they fallen? For ever fallen and lost!

"And what are we? Were we better than they? Or did we stand firmer? Or were we more out of danger? Or more on our watch? No, in no wise. It once seemed impossible we should fall: but now we are surprised to see we stand. And, Oh, who knows what another day may bring forth! We are as likely to be in hell to-morrow, as they were yesterday! God is no more obliged to keep us than he was them. And what if we should fall! Oh, how dreadful, how infinitely dreadful, the thought! We will all go and fall prostrate before the throne of the great IMMUTABLE; and cry, *O, father of our spirits, of thy sovereign grace, keep us, we humbly pray thee.* Nor will we ever forget what we have seen. Nor will we ever cease to watch and pray."

2. Reflections of the elect angels on the temptation of satan, and the fall of man.

"Oh, the hellish pride, and spite and malice of satan, once our companion in bliss! How gladly would he ruin the whole system, were it in his power, and even overturn the throne of heaven's eternal King! How wicked a deed hath man committed! and how righteous the doom of our glorious monarch! All who rebel against him deserve to be turned out of his world, and lie under his everlasting displeasure. But what an infinite weight of vengeance doth satan deserve! We rejoice, the Almighty hath decreed to bruise his head, and frustrate all his schemes, and bring salvation to man. We rejoice, that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and will for ever reign.

"*O,* THOU, *who only art immutable, behold, man is fallen! We prostrate ourselves at thy feet. O, keep us, of thy mere sovereign goodness, we most earnestly and humbly do beseech thee! We claim no right to such a favour. Our fellow-creatures in heaven, and now on earth are fallen. Thy throne is guiltless. But, O, thou father of spirits, keep us, of thy mere sovereign grace, through our state of trial, to the everlasting honour of thy great name; that, through eternal ages, we may celebrate thy praises. In the revelation of thy designs of mercy towards fallen man, we see the infinite goodness of thy nature, and that thou canst have mercy on whom thou wilt have mercy, and at the same time secure the honour of thy government. We*

flee to thy sovereign goodness for preserving grace; nor will we ever forget what we have seen, nor will we cease to watch and pray."

3. Reflections of the elect angels on the death of Christ; attentive spectators on this solemn occasion, no doubt, although invisible to the surrounding, insulting multitude.

"This is he who brought the universe into existence, and is worshipped by all the hosts of heaven! This is he who appeared to Abraham and to Moses; gave the law on Mount Sinai, and dwelt in the Jewish temple; then in the form of God, now in the form of a servant; *Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews!* And this gives us higher conceptions of the divine goodness, than ever before entered into our hearts: That after mankind had continued 4,000 years in obstinate rebellion, and given millions of instances of an inveterate enmity against our Almighty sovereign, yet he can thus freely give his Son to die for them! But, Oh, the hellish temper of the surrounding crouds, insulting the Son of God in his last agonies! Pushed on by satan, who knows what they are doing, although they do not. And thus satan will treat the God who made him. This is his heart. Oh, what is there he would not do, had he power on his side! No wonder he is doomed to eternal woes. Hell is his proper place. And such might we now have been, if God had left us to fall when they did. Oh, the sovereign grace of God to us! Preserved to this day in our integrity! Oh, the dreadful nature of sin! Oh, the ruined state of a guilty world, seduced by satan, should justice take place! But here hangs their expiatory sacrifice; the Son of God dying in their room! The whole intelligent system now sees how God hates sin; and how resolved he is, as governor of the universe, to bear ample testimony against it. Not one of the guilty race of Adam will he pardon, unless his Son die in their stead. The greatness of the atonement shows how great he thinks the crime. If all the angelic world had been offered as a sacrifice of atonement, it had been infinitely beneath this. Yea, compared with this, it had been nothing, and less than nothing, and vanity. Oh, the infinite evil of sin! Oh, the infinite greatness of God! How does the death of his Son show him to be infinitely exalted! None

fit to mediate between him and sinful men, but his Son! Nor any blood precious enough to make atonement but his! Nor can satan, under all his woes, through eternal ages, ever once think that he is punished in a sovereign, despotic, arbitrary manner; much less can such a thought ever enter into our hearts in heaven, while we behold the Lamb in the midst of the throne, and remember how he was treated by his Father, when once he stood in the room of sinners. Nay, now we are more fully convinced than ever, that sin really deserves the eternal punishment which God will inflict. Oh, the infinite evil of rising in rebellion against the infinitely glorious and almighty Monarch of the universe, the maker and Lord of all! Oh, what an infinite kindness, that God has kept us from this infinite evil! Our obligations to him, how are they infinitely increased! And, after all this, for us ever to turn apostates, Oh, how unutterably dreadful quite infinitely dreadful the thought! If, when the Son of God arises from the dead, ascends to heaven, and sits down on the right hand of the majesty on high, and becomes head over all the saved from among men, in whom they will be for ever safe, whose immutability will render them immutable in goodness for ever, Oh, if he might become our head too! How infinitely great would be the favour of God in this: nor should we ever forget the freeness of God's grace*."

* And if, on the exaltation of Christ, the elect angels were confirmed, it is easy to see how they would naturally be a thousand, (if not a million,) times more sensible of the greatness and freeness of the goodness and grace of God, exercised towards them, than if they and all others had been immediately confirmed at their first existence. That Christ is to be head of angels, as well as of saints, seems to be intimated in Eph. i. 10. "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him." And perhaps the confirmation of the elect angels is what the Apostle refers to, in Col. i. 19, 20. "For it pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell, and by him, to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." And it is certain that they receive great instruction from God's works here on earth. They behold "the whole earth full of the glory of the Lord." Isai. vi. 3. And it is certain, God designed they should. And that he has ordered things as he has, to the intent, "that unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Eph. iii. 10. And it is equally certain, they are very attentive. For these are things, which "the angels desire to look into." 1 Pet. i. 12. And they have the best advantages for a

4. Reflections of the elect angels on the destruction of Antichrist, and on the millennium.

"Now at length an end is come to the long series of mischief which hath been wrought by that furious dragon, that subtle old serpent, once a glorious angel, now of long time a devil. Behold, he is bound, and shut up, and can deceive the nations no more! Behold, Babylon, the great is fallen; is fallen! Hallelujah! Salvation and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments. Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. And, lo! all his foes fall before him, unable to resist: and the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And now Christ shall reign on earth a thousand years, and all nations shall serve him, and all the people shall be holy, and all shall know him, from the least to the greatest; and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters fill the seas, till the saved of the Lord be as the stars of heaven, and as the sand on the sea-shore, innumerable. Hallelujah!

"This grand event, which, to satan, is matter of so great confusion and anguish, is to us matter of the greatest joy. And yet once satan and his hosts were all of our number, and we sang the praises of God together. Oh, the surprising change sin hath wrought! Oh, the distinguishing grace of God, which kept us from falling, too, on that dreadful day of satan's revolt! A day by us never to be forgotten. Now satan lies chained in the bottomless pit. And we are in triumph on the occasion around the throne."

5. On Christ's second coming. "Behold, he cometh in the clouds of heaven, and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him shall mourn; and the bold and haughty, who once bid him defiance, shall call to the mountains and rocks to fall on them and cover them; the crush of moun-

large acquaintance with these things, as "they are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation." Heb. i. 14. And they deeply interest themselves in all God's dispensations towards the church on earth, as is evident from the book of the *Revelation* throughout. And they will attend Jesus Christ when he comes to judge the world, and God's grand plan finished, and things in God's kingdom brought to a final settlement. Mat. xxv. 31. 46.

tains being less dreadful than the wrath of the Lamb. And now shall the scene close, and the ways of God to men and angels be all justified. And God shall receive glory from all his works.

"See, yonder cometh satan, with all his guilty host, trembling, to appear before the bar. Oh, never let us forget the day, when they sang the praises of God with us before the throne! How surprised were we at their unexpected revolt! We then little thought what was before us; little guessed what was in the creature's heart, or in God's heart. But now we have seen both; and now we see the result. God is exalted, his authority established; Satan and his host are conquered, and are now to be sent away into everlasting punishment. And, but for the distinguishing grace of God, which has always held us up, we might now have been as they now are. No heart can conceive, no tongue can express the infinite obligations we are under to God: of whom, and by whom, and to whom, are all things; to whom belongs glory for ever and ever. Amen.

"Now, therefore, let eternal ages be, by us all, employed in contemplating God's glorious works; in admiring the wisdom of all his ways; revering the dread majesty of the universe; magnifying and extolling his great name; exulting in his supremacy, and celebrating the praises of his free and boundless goodness."

It is easy to see how natural it must be for the elect angels to make these and such like reflections on these occasions. And it is as easy to see how the knowledge of God, and of themselves, increases their humility; their dependance on God; their reverence, love, gratitude, and joy, *i. e.* their holiness and happiness. And it is easy to see how the fall of angels and men, and God's conduct on these occasions, gives them these new ideas of themselves and of God. Had sin and misery never entered into God's world, they could never have had these ideas of themselves, or of God. And, if what has been said of the angels may be applied to mankind, as for substance we see it may, and that, too, with some additional circumstances of great weight, as will appear in the next *sermon*, then this will be the sum of the argument.

So clear and so adequate an idea of God and themselves could not have been obtained by finite intelligences, through eternal ages, had sin and misery never entered into God's world.

But the more clear and adequate their idea of God and themselves, the more humble, holy, and happy will the inhabitants of heaven be, and the more will God be exalted. And that in such a superior degree, as that more honour will redound to God, and more humility, holiness, and happiness, be in the system, than if sin and misery had been for ever unknown.

Now, if God's present plan is in the best manner suited to honour God, and to increase the humility, holiness, and happiness of the system, then is his wisdom vindicated; for wisdom consists in proposing the best ends, and choosing the best means for their accomplishment. And thus God's conduct, in his grand plan, is analagous to his conduct in the *four instances* mentioned in the *first sermon*; and the same reasons which vindicate his wisdom in them, vindicate him in this.

THE WISDOM OF GOD

IN

THE PERMISSION OF SIN.

SERMON IV.

GENESIS l. 20.

Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good.

If the holy Scriptures are read over, and viewed in the character of a *narrative*, we shall find the *history of the Deity*, and the *history of human nature*, interwoven throughout, from the beginning of *Genesis* to the end of the *Revelation*, filling up by far the greatest part of those sacred pages. Here we shall see the bright and glorious character of the Deity, drawn in a most lively and striking manner, in an authentic account written by God's own direction, of his conduct from the beginning of the world. And, at the same time, human nature painted to the life, in the behaviour of mankind through a long succession of ages. And this BOOK God puts into our hands as the best means to form us to views and tempers suitable to the heavenly world. And why? Why such a BOOK, for such an END?—Plainly, because the knowledge of God and ourselves is of the last importance to the holiness and happiness of that world. And, indeed, on our strictest researches into things, we shall find that our highest moral rectitude, perfection, and happiness, must arise from, and consist in, an enlarged, clear, lively view of God and ourselves, and an answerable frame of heart. Let us view God as he is, and ourselves as we be, as nearly in the same light that God does, as our finite capacities will admit, and have an answerable frame of heart, and we are at the top of that moral perfection and happiness we are capable of. And if, therefore, God's great and universal plan is so contrived, as to put intelligences under the best possible advantages for this, then it is the best plan possible. We have be-

fore entered on this glorious theme. And let these things be now considered for the further illustration of the subject.

1. Nothing can be known of God, by created intelligences, be their taste for divine knowledge ever so good, and their capacities ever so great, any further than God manifests himself; for it is beyond the power of any finite intelligence to look immediately into God's heart, as we can into our own, and view and contemplate the divine perfections as they are in the divine essence. Yea, we can have no idea at all of the Divine essence; yea, we can have no idea even of the essence of our own souls. The utmost we can do, by way of immediate intuition, is to perceive our thoughts, and thence discern the habitual inclinations of our hearts. And if we could look into God's essence, and see all his thoughts, we might thence learn his nature, without any manifestation whatsoever. We might know God's heart, by immediate intuition, as we can our own. But this is absolutely impossible. We cannot look into the hearts of our fellow-creatures, much less can we into God's heart. Neither God's thoughts, nor any of his views, nor any of his designs, could ever have been known, had he given no manner of manifestation of himself: those thoughts and purposes in his heart, which he has not manifested, cannot be found out; greatness of genius is no help in this case. Sir *Isaac Newton* could not tell when the day of judgment would be, sooner than the greatest idiot. Yea, as God had not revealed it, so "of that day and hour knew no man; no, not the angels, neither the Son, but the Father only." *Mark* xii. 32. Even the man, Christ Jesus, now in his exalted state in heaven, cannot look into the divine essence, and see the secret thoughts in God's heart. If he comes to the knowledge of these secrets, it is by divine communication; as is plain from *Rev.* i. 1. "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God GAVE unto him." And if the most exalted creature, by immediate intuition, cannot look into God's heart, so much as to discern *one single thought*, then nothing can be known of God in this way. In a word, neither the being of God, nor more nor less of any of his perfections, could ever have been known, had there been absolutely no evidence at all of his Being, or of any of his per-

fections; but no evidence ever was had, or ever can be had, in this case, but what originally comes from him; therefore nothing can be known of God any further than he, some how or other, makes it evident to his creatures: which is what I mean by his manifesting himself. Therefore,

2. As all the ideas of God, which are according to truth, in the whole intelligent system, originally flow from the manifestation which he makes of himself; so the more *clearly* and *fully* he manifests himself, the greater advantages will there eternally be to make swift progress in knowledge, humility, holiness, and happiness. Intelligences, who are finite, can never have an adequate idea of him who is infinite. Their knowledge may increase, and their views brighten eternally. And the greater their advantages are, the swifter will be their progress, supposing their taste for divine knowledge to be good. He that is now the lowest, may, millions of ages hence, be much higher in attainments, than he that is now the highest among all the heavenly hosts. Meanwhile, those glorious CHIEFS may be still advanced, almost infinitely, before them. But, while all ranks in heaven are thus rising in the knowledge of God, and in all divine attainments, eternally rising; yet they can never comprehend him who is INFINITE. He is still infinitely above them; and they are as nothing and vanity, compared with him. Their conviction of this will eternally increase; and so their humility eternally grow; and God be for ever exalted higher and higher in their view: which will cause their love to his glorious majesty, joy in his supremacy, and happiness in him and in his government, for ever to augment. And if their progress will be in proportion to their advantages, i. e. in proportion to the manifestations God makes of himself, then the fuller and brighter the divine manifestations, the swifter their progress. Of two intelligences, of equal taste and capacity, it is possible that one, by having a thousand times greater advantages, may make a thousand times greater proficiency than the other, in the same time. Let an intelligence, of equal taste and capacity with the angel Gabriel, be created on the morning of the day of judgment, and be placed in some remote parts of infinite space, at a distance from the whole present crea-

tion, and spend that day in solitary contemplation, without any advantages to gain the knowledge of God, but what must necessarily result from its own existence and powers; and let Gabriel, the same day, descend from heaven with Christ, and be a spectator of all the transactions of that solemn season; and it is easy to see that Gabriel must gain a thousand, or ten thousand, or rather, perhaps a million times more knowledge of the nature of God, the moral governor of the world, than that solitary spirit. So Moses, in about six months, (viz. from the time he saw the burning bush, to the end of the twice forty days he was on Mount Sinai,) doubtless gained more knowledge of God than he had all his life long before, i. e. more in six months than in eighty years.

As God has formed finite intelligences capable of improvements through eternal ages; so it is reasonable to expect that he will provide those who shall be the objects of his everlasting favour, with the best advantages to make a swift progress. And that plan will, in this respect, be judged the best that is most suited to this end. That plan, therefore, of all possible plans, must in this respect be the best, in which is given the fullest and the brightest manifestation of all the divine perfections. But,

3. The apostacy of angels and men has given the moral governor of the universe an opportunity to set all his moral perfections in the clearest and most striking point of light; and, as it were, to open all his heart to the view of finite intelligences.

The whole intelligent system now may see what God thinks to be his due from his creatures, and how jealous he is of the rights of the Godhead, and how resolved to maintain the honour of his authority and government. And now the whole system may see, too, that as he is God of god's, and Lord of lords, the original proprietor of all things, so he thinks it belongs to him, without the advice or leave of his creatures, according to the counsel of his own will, to lay out that plan which seems best in his own eyes; and to do what he thinks best to do; and to forbear what he thinks best to forbear; to bring such intelligences into being as he thinks best; and having said and done what he thinks best, to forbear to say

or do any more, and stand by, and let them take their course, practically saying, "They owe themselves to me: I owe them nothing." And if they fall, he holds himself at liberty to proceed with and punish them strictly according to law, without any mitigation, the law being exactly right; so that it is matter of mere sovereign grace to grant relief to any; a thing he may do, or not do, as he pleases, for aught he owes to them. Yea, he holds himself bound to do nothing for their relief, but in a way that shall be honourable to his law. Nevertheless, while he shows such a steady regard to his own honour, and so inflexibly adheres to the rights of the Godhead, as, by office, he is bound, being moral governor of the universe; at the same time, the whole system may see, too, that his goodness is as boundless as his nature. But then, he loves his creatures should know how the case really stands; that the rights of the Godhead ought not to be given up, and that the exercises of his goodness are absolutely free; that while they view things in the same light he does, they may feel as he thinks it is fit they should in such a case*. But time would fail to hint at the various ideas of himself, which he

* Unless property be known and acknowledged between man and man, and the boundaries fixed, there can be no room for the exercise of generosity. If my estate is none of mine, then it is not mine to give. If my neighbour may come and take what, and when he pleases, then I have no right to withhold any thing. My neighbour may justly think hardly of me if I do; and will not thank me, if I do not. But if I have any thing which I call my own, and to which my neighbour has no right, then he must acknowledge, notwithstanding any claim he has to make, I may do what I will with that. As the *householder* in the parable, (*Mat.* xx. 15.) said, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" And if my neighbour views my property in the same light that I do, then he will be apt to view my generosity in the same light too; and what I offer as a free gift, he will receive and acknowledge as such; and feel as is fit. And it was absolutely necessary that property should be known and acknowledged, and the boundaries fixed between God and his creatures. And God by the law he gave to his creatures, as soon as created, and by his conduct since, has effectually done it; has plainly said what was due from them to him; and as plainly declared that he owed them nothing. And these boundaries set up by God, were they but acceded to, and acquiesced in by man, the chief matters of controversy between God and man would be removed, and things would look fair for a reconciliation. But while man denies his debt to God, and makes large demands on the Deity, there is no hope of an accommodation. For God will demolish the universe sooner than give up his just rights, in favour of his rebellious creatures. *Mat.* v. 17.

has communicated in consequence of the grand apostacy of angels and men. Indeed, he has given materials for contemplation, that an whole eternity cannot exhaust.

The picture of himself, which God has given, and will give, in his conduct, from the fall of angels to the final consummation of all things, is gloriously full and complete. He has been called to act in an infinite variety of cases; and, to speak of him according to the language of scripture in the most trying circumstances, (read *Ezek.* xx. 5—22.) he has been tempted and tried, not merely 40 years in the wilderness, by the Israelites, but from the beginning of the world to this day, by every nation, kindred, language, and tongue; and has had opportunity to show his heart, by his conduct, in all the infinite variety of cases which have ever happened among the millions and millions of millions of subjects which he had to deal with. All which, together with all that remains to be accomplished to the end of the world, will be brought into view another day, and serve to make the picture of himself, which he has given, very full, and gloriously complete in the eyes of all holy intelligences.

Besides, his GREAT WORK, to which all his other works bear some respect, is so much like himself, that, in a manner, it gives his whole picture at once. An *incarnate God on the cross*, if the divine views, motives, and ends, are all considered, is a piece of conduct, of which it may be said, as it was of him that was chief actor in this affair: It is *the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person.* To create a world was but a small matter with the ALMIGHTY. With a word he could bring system after system into being with infinite ease. But the work of redemption, by the death of his Son, seems to be a work equal with himself, and in which he has expressed all his heart*.

* The scripture informs us of no created intelligence besides angels and men; much less does it attempt to raise our devotion by a contemplation of millions of globes inhabited besides this our earth. But, according to scripture, the work of redemption is God's great work; and from *this*, chiefly, we are to learn his moral character; and *this* are we to contemplate, with the other branches of his moral government, as revealed in the bible. And that love and devotion, which arises from these scriptural views of God and his works, is the scriptural devotion, and

Actions speak louder than words. The divine conduct sets his picture in a more striking, affecting point of light, than any mere verbal descriptions could have done, had there been no opportunity for conduct. When the ALMIGHTY actually banished the sinning angels from his presence, down to eternal darkness and wo, it set his character in a much stronger light, in the eyes of the elect angels, than his previous threatening had done. And when the day of judgment actually comes, and the whole system are assembled to see and hear, and give up their account, and receive their sentence, it will be much more real than ever it was before made to any of God's creatures, by any descriptions or imaginations they ever had. And it will set the divine perfections in a light proportionably clear, striking, and affecting.

Had all things gone on still and quiet in God's kingdom, there had been no occasion or opportunity for these works, by which all will *know that he is the* LORD, and the whole system *be filled with his glory.*

Had the posterity of Abraham lived quietly in the land of Canaan, and multiplied there for 470 years, the Canaanites dying off meanwhile, as the Indians do in America, they might have filled the land with a much greater number of inhabitants, than when Joshua brought them in, and no Joseph sold; no infants drowned; no making bricks; no carcases left in the wilderness, and they strangers to such great changes, trials, and sorrows; but then God would not have had an opportunity for any of those wonderful works which he wrought, whereby it *was known that he was the* LORD, and the *whole earth was filled with his glory,* and a foundation laid for much good to that people, then, and in all succeeding generations; yea, to this day, the whole church of God reap the benefit of those wonderful works which were recorded for our instruction, on whom the ends of the world are come.

infinitely preferable to imaginary transports. If our views of the works of creation, providence, and redemption, are according to scripture, we need not raise millions of imaginary systems of intelligences to inflame our hearts with a divine fervour; nor have we the example of one saint in the Bible to justify such an attempt.

So, had sin been for ever unknown in the system, there would have been no opportunity for the mighty works which God has wrought since the day he drove the apostate angels out of heaven, and our first parents out of paradise, and will yet work to the end of time, and final consummation of all things. All which, put together, will give the most full and complete, the most clear and striking picture, of the divine nature, for the contemplation and instruction of the inhabitants of heaven, through eternal ages.

4. While God forbears to interpose and hinder the apostacy of finite intelligences, being absolutely unobliged to say or do any more than he had said and done; and while, being left to their own free choice, a number of the angels in heaven, and man upon earth, rebel; and, being left to themselves, all the fallen angels, and great numbers of fallen men, go on in their rebellion, acting out their hearts, and exhibiting their picture in their conduct, through a long succession of ages; they plainly show what all finite intelligences in heaven and on earth might have come to, if they had not been prevented by the mere free grace of the only immutable Being. Meanwhile, God, as has been said, in his conduct, sets his own character in the clearest and fullest light. And so all holy intelligences will, through eternal ages, have the advantages of these two complete pictures; the picture that God has exhibited of himself, and the picture which fallen creatures have exhibited of themselves, to assist them to a clear view and realizing sense of what God is, and of what they might have been. Just as the pious Jews in the earthly Canaan, when they reviewed the conduct of God towards their forefathers, and their conduct towards him, had the picture of each before their eyes, for their instruction, from age to age. Which leads me to another thought:

5. At the end of these forty years, Moses assembles the whole congregation of Israel in the plains of Moab; and, that they might be under the better advantages to reap the benefit of all past transactions, now just as they are entering into the holy land, he rehearses all God's conduct towards them, and all their conduct towards him, and labours deeply to impress a sense of both on their hearts; so, at the final

consummation of all things, the whole intelligent system will be assembled, and all past things be opened; all God's conduct towards his creatures, and all their conduct towards him; and that in such a manner as will make the deepest impressions on all that great assembly.

But as this will be a most solemn day, and perhaps the most important day that ever did or ever will happen, and a day on which great light will be given to God's universal plan; so it may not be amiss to stop here awhile, and consider, who is to be the Judge; and who shall be present in that great assembly; and what will be brought into view; and what will be the final sentence pronounced on the wicked; and what will be the visible consequence; and what the state of the righteous when all is over; and what must be their reflections upon the whole.

1. The MESSIAH, the Son of God, the seed of the woman, will be the judge. So great was his zeal for the honour of God, and concern for the salvation of lost sinners, that he offered to undertake to frustrate satan's scheme; and, on the cross, at the expense of his life, he entirely disconcerted the plan the devil had laid, and sapped the foundation of his kingdom; opening a way, in which glory might come to God, and salvation to fallen man: which so pleased the eternal Father, that he gave him for his reward, the very thing his heart was chiefly set upon; even full power and authority completely to accomplish his design. Messiah took the throne, and, at the head of the universe, conducted all things from that day and forward, with his end in constant view, till satan's kingdom was destroyed, and he had reigned on earth a thousand years. And having seen of the travail of his soul to his satisfaction, in the recovery of a great multitude of the human race, a multitude like the stars of heaven, and as the sands on the sea-shore, innumerable; now he comes to cause strict justice to take place on all the obstinate adherents to satan's interest. Behold, he cometh in the clouds of heaven, and every eye shall see him, and the fatal, the finishing stroke shall be laid full on the old serpent's head: which shall be done in the most public manner; for,

2. The whole intelligent system shall be present. The holy angels, once satan's companions in heaven, shall now descend in glory and joy, attending the righteous Judge. And with them the saints shall come from the upper world, and receive their bodies, glorious and immortal, raised by their almighty Saviour. Meanwhile, the saints on earth shall be changed, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then earth and sea, death and hell, shall give up their dead; and all kindreds, nations, languages, and tongues, shall be gathered to the bar. And satan and his hosts, who of a long time have been in chains, reserved to the judgment of the great day, shall be forced, guilty and trembling, to stand forth in the sight of the whole creation.

And now,

3. The history of the grand rebellion shall be opened to the view of the whole intelligent creation, from the day of satan's first revolt; his expulsion from heaven, and seduction of the human kind, with all his views and motives, ends and designs, and the methods by him taken from the foundation of his kingdom on earth, to its final destruction; and how apostate men have heartily joined in his interest; and both, as it were, combined together to defeat the designs of the Redeemer.

The blood of the martyrs will be brought into the account, from the blood of righteous Abel, to the blood of the last martyr that shall be slain, to evidence the obstinate malice of satan and his adherents; who rather than that the Redeemer's kingdom should be set up, have shed rivers of human blood. Yea, the Son of God himself has been put to death in this apostate world.

All the conduct of the human race before the flood, and how their wickedness brought on the general deluge; and all the conduct of mankind since, together with the methods of divine grace from the beginning of the world; particularly the calling of Abraham, and all the glorious methods of divine grace with his seed, from age to age, till the coming of the Messiah; together with their perverse conduct in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the holy land; their killing the prophets, and stoning those who were sent unto them, and final-

by crucifying the Son of God, and obstinately rejecting his glorious gospel; and the calling of the Gentiles into the Christian Church; their loathness to leave their idols; the bloody work they made among the primitive professors of Christianity, together with a history of the rise, and progress, and dreadful deeds of the grand anti-christian apostacy, will all be laid open to public view, in the sight of the creation.

And not only these great affairs, but also all the conduct of particular sinners, in every age, with every secret thing, shall be brought to light on that great day.

And while Messiah appears in all his Father's glory, the reasonableness of God's law, and the infinite grace of the gospel, will, *by his very presence*, be brought into such a clear view, in the eyes of all that great assembly, as will not only strike the fallen angels, who have been inveterate enemies to the righteous government of God, and constant opposers of the gracious designs of the Redeemer, into the utmost guilt and confusion; but also overwhelm, with inexcusable guilt and self-condemning reproaches, all the lost sons of Adam, of every nation under heaven. The Gentile will now feel himself *without excuse*, for breaking the law of nature, (*Rom.* i. 20.) and the Jew and the Christian much more, who have sinned against greater light, and despised infinite grace; so that *every mouth will be stopped*, and all satan's adherents from among the human race, will stand *guilty before God*, (*Rom.* iii. 19.) For, when the Lord cometh with all his heavenly attendants, to execute judgment upon obstinate enemies, he will convince all, and silence all, who have justified themselves, and spoken many "hard speeches against him." (*Jude* 14, 15.) For that shall not only be a day of wrath, but of "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." (*Rom.* ii. 5.) Meanwhile, all holy intelligences will be fully prepared cordially to approve, yea, heartily to rejoice in the final sentence of the Judge. The forethought of which dreadful sentence will fill satan and all his mighty potentates with terror unutterable. "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men," who had met armies in the field of battle, and looked death in the face undaunted, "and every bond-man, and every free-man," shall

wish to "hide themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains;" yea, they will wish "the mountains and the rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb." (*Rev.* vi. 15, 16.)

4. He shall pronounce the sentence, DEPART, *ye cursed.* To which all the holy angels and saints, with divine and sacred fervor, will say, AMEN, HALLELUJAH. And,

5. No sooner will the sentence be pronounced, but they shall visibly *go away into everlasting punishment;* for God, who foresaw their apostacy and final wickedness, before the creation of the world, did in the creation provide proper materials by which to *show his wrath, and make his power known,* and give an eternal image of his infinite hatred of sin, in the sight of the whole intelligent system; for all the starry *heavens,* and this *earth,* are reserved to that purpose, laid up in store as fuel, "reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. And the heavens shall" then "pass away with a great noise," rushing together into one general heap; "for the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements," of which they are composed, "shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also," involved in the general ruin, "and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." And so the whole material system shall form one immense *lake of fire and brimstone,* where the heat shall be almost infinitely intense, in which the damned shall weep and wail, and gnash their teeth, for ever. "For their worm shall never die, and the fire shall never be quenched." (2 *Peter* iii. 7. 12. *Mark* ix. 44.) And all this open to the view, eternally open to the view of all the inhabitants of heaven. "For they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb." (*Rev.* xiv. 10, 11.) And this great fire will eternally be a visible emblem of the fierceness and wrath of almighty God, *to show his wrath and make his power known.* As when Pharaoh and his hosts were overwhelmed in the Red sea, in sight of all the Israelites, the God of the Hebrews "showed his power," and caused "his name to be declared throughout all the earth"; (*Exod.* ix. 16.) So now, when satan and all his adherents from an apostate world are cast into this lake

of fire and brimstone, to be tormented day and night, for ever and ever," (*Rev.* xx. 10.) it will " show God's wrath, and make his power known," in the sight of the whole intelligent system. (*Rom.* ix. 22.)

6. The grand rebellion in the intellectual system being brought to this issue by MESSIAH, the prince, whose name is *King of kings, and Lord of lords,* and an end put to this visible creation, in which so much sin has been committed, now doomed to eternal fire, MESSIAH, with the angels, his attendants, and with the saved from among men, in number like the sands on the sea-shore, shall ascend to the heavenly Zion with singing, and enter into everlasting joys.

For, as the Messiah loved his church, when she lay polluted in her blood, and gave himself for her, and redeemed her from the earth, and washed her in his own blood, and made her a glorious church, and adorned her as a bride is adorned for her husband; so now the marriage of the Lamb shall be celebrated before all the inhabitants of heaven; and she shall be called " *The bride the Lamb's wife.*" (*Rev.* xxi. 9.) The saved shall be taken into the nearest union, and most beatific communion with Jesus Christ; who will rejoice over them as the fruit of his labours; as the travail of his soul; as the joy that was set before him. Even " as a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride; so will he rejoice over them." (*Isai.* lxii. 5.) And "he will rejoice and joy in them." (*Isai.* lxv. 19.) And " rest in his love." (*Zeph.* iii. 17.) And thus they shall *be for ever with the Lord;* shall *be where he is,* and *behold his glory.* And *God will be their God, and wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.* All temptations and trials are at an end; for ever out of the reach of satan, sin, and danger. *All things* are *made new;* are put upon a new foot, not as in the first creation, when all finite intelligences were put on trial, and left to stand or fall for themselves, God unobliged to hold them up, in consequence whereof sin entered into heaven and earth; whereas, in this new heaven and earth, there shall be no sin; but in them " dwelleth righteousness." (2 *Peter* iii. 13.) Christ will eternally be the

head of all holy intelligences, and his immutability be their eternal security. (*Eph.* i. 10.) So they shall possess this good land which flows with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands, of which the earthly Canaan was a type: I say, they shall possess it for ever.

7. And upon the whole, what must be the reflections of angels and saints, in those happy regions of light, love, peace, and eternal contemplation? What must the elect angels think, while they recollect the day of their creation, when satan and all his hosts stood with them, and bowed and worshipped before the throne; and remember his foul revolt, his expulsion from heaven, his attempts to dishonour God, and get himself adored in an apostate world; and now view his eternal overthrow, chained to the burning lake for ever and ever?

And what must be the reflections of Adam, Abel, Enoch, and Noah; of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; of Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and of all the prophets, apostles, and martyrs; and of all the saved, in every age of the world, and from every nation, language, and tongue, under heaven? while they recollect the original apostacy of mankind, and the whole history of all the conduct of an apostate world, from the fall of Adam to the day of judgment, as lately laid before the tribunal of Christ; and remember their own former awful temper and dreadful state while secure in sin, running in full career to hell; and consider how they were pitied and redeemed by an incarnate God, and stopped and reclaimed by sovereign grace, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; but for which they not only might, but certainly would, have been in the same infinitely dreadful condition they now behold others in, once their neighbours and companions, chained among devils to the burning lake.

As the pious Israelites, when quietly settled in the earthly Canaan, would naturally call to mind the day when they were bondmen in the land of Egypt, and the Egyptian manners, and the idolatrous customs in which they were educated; and how they had forgotten the God of Abraham, and the promised land, until the arrival of Moses from the land of Midian, with the rod of God in his hand; and how they felt

in the time of the plagues, and at their egression, and when pursued by Pharaoh, and when passing through the sea on dry ground, and when they found themselves safe on the other shore, while Pharaoh and his hosts were sunk like lead in the mighty waters; and talk over all their wilderness-travels, and all God's wonderful works; and how they sinned at Massah, Tiberah, and Kibroth-hattaavah, and were always provoking the Lord to wrath; and how the carcasses of six hundred thousand fell in the wilderness. "Yea, and we should all have been cut off and destroyed, had not the Lord wrought for his great name's sake. It was not for our righteousness, nor the uprightness of our hearts, that he brought us into this good land; but from his own sovereign, self-moving goodness, and that he might fill the whole earth with his glory. Wherefore, we will tell our sons and our sons' sons, what God hath wrought; that we and they may fear and reverence that fearful and glorious name, THE LORD OUR GOD, and adore his distinguishing goodness, and walk in all his ways, and keep all his commands for ever." So it will be just as natural for those who are saved from among men, when the day of judgment is past, and they safe in the heavenly Canaan, from thence to look back, and survey, and talk over all the ways of God to men, and all the ways of man to God, from the creation to the final conflagration. And while they behold the divine nature set in so clear, strong, and striking a light; and the picture still brightened by a view of the shocking conduct of the human race towards him, how will they feel, and what will they say?

Let us but imagine ourselves in the company of the saved, and attend to the conversation of heaven. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and angels, mixed in the same assembly, all join to carry on the conversation, each filled with holy delight, while the ways of God to man, and the ways of man to God, are all the theme.

ADAM begins: "How surprising is it to find myself and so many of my posterity in this happy world, happier a thousand times than the paradise I lost! Indeed, I was happy then, but the scenes of darkness, guilt, and wo, I passed through after my revolt from God, and all I have seen and heard from that day

to this, things never to be forgotten, will for ever heighten the joys of this blessed place. But, Oh, my foul revolt! How infinitely heinous was the crime! How just, if God had left me and all my race to have gone on in rebellion, died in despair, and spent eternal ages with satan and his hosts, in yonder lake of fire and brimstone! But sovereign grace interposed! And now I see the promise accomplished; the seed of the woman hath bruised the serpent's head. Know it, then, you are happy, not by me: not to me, therefore, but to God, and God alone, is all the glory due."

GABRIEL next: "Indeed, ye sons of men, is all the glory due to God. He only is immutable. See, in yon lake, satan and all his hosts for ever lost. Once this was their abode. With us they worshipped before the throne; but they fell. And so might we have done, but for the grace of God. And so might all mankind have fallen, too, had they been created at once, as we in heaven were; and each set to act for himself, as many of Adam's conceited sons have often foolishly wished had been the case. From the day that satan fell, to this very hour, every thing we have observed has joined to establish us in this, that there is no safety for finite intelligences, but in God alone. He only is by nature immutable. Nor can a creature, how exalted soever, arrive so near to a state of independence, as to be in himself immutably good. God is our strength and refuge, and the only source of our eternal stability; of whom, and by whom, and to whom, are all things; to whom belongs glory for ever!"

St. PAUL. "No doubt, the interest of the human race was as safe in Adam's hands as it would have been in our own. And it being no injury to us, God might, without any injustice to us, appoint him our public head. And, indeed, considering the design God had in view, there was great wisdom in that constitution; for Adam was suited, as a type and shadow, while we dwelt in that world of darkness, to assist us to right conceptions of Christ, our second Adam; our second public head. The Omniscient, seeing no trust could be put in his saints, and that even the angels could not be depended upon, did, before the foundation of the world, design his own Son should become incarnate, and stand forth as the

first-born of every creature, the head of the creation of God; that in him he might gather together, fix and establish, all the elect, whether belonging to heaven or earth, as we see at this day."

ADAM. "How glorious is the exchange! Once I was your public head; but in me all was lost. God left me, that it might be seen what was in my heart; that it might appear all flesh is but grass. And now, not I, but his own Son, is your head. And your eternal welfare is secured in the divine immutability. This glory was due to God alone, who only is unchangeable: and this glory, by means of my fall, God has taken to himself in the sight of the whole intellectual system."

GABRIEL. "So satan once stood at the head of all the angelic hosts, who revolted with him, a mighty CHIEF. And, like the bright morning-star, excelled in lustre all those stars of heaven. But how art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning! And how hast thou drawn off a third part of the stars of heaven, to join in thy revolt* !"

St. PAUL. "But now, not an archangel, nor the father of mankind, but God's dear Son, is, in this new state of things, at the head of all holy intelligences. Both angels and men are gathered together in one; even in him, who is the image of the invisible God, and has exhibited the sublimest picture of the Deity in all his works, but chiefly in the works of our redemption."

ADAM. "And all is free sovereign grace! His giving being, natural powers, and moral excellencies to his creatures in their first creation, brought them into debt to him; but not him to them. They owed themselves to him; he owed them nothing. He was unobliged to become their surety. I ought to have been obedient to the God that made me; but I fell; and the throne of the Almighty was guiltless. Destruction was our due. Oh, how free and sovereign is the grace that has saved us!"

* We read of *principalities* and *powers* among the evil angels, (Col. ii. 15.) as well as among the good. (Eph. i. 21.) And one of their number is called a *prince*. (Eph. ii. 2.) And doubtless he was *prince* before he fell, as well as since. See Rev. xiv. 3, 4. 7, 8, 9.

MOSES. "What must have been the consequence, had mankind, in their fallen state, been merely under the law of nature, which required sinless protection, cursing the man who continued not in all things! And yet this law was strictly righteous; and, as such, was it republished from Mount Sinai, by the holy ONE of Israel. But, although our depravity did not free us from the government and authority of God, yet it laid a sure foundation for our breaking the law. And so, had mere law taken place, we should all have been for ever lost; and this had been but strictly just. But, Oh, the free and boundless grace of God! His own Son became a curse for us, that all these blessings we now enjoy in this happy world might come upon us."

St. PAUL. "Creatures becoming apostate, and turning enemies and rebels to the God that made them, this did not in the least disannul God's right to them, and authority over them; but they still remained, by right, his subjects, and under his government, and accountable at his tribunal. And, accordingly, we have lately seen wicked men and devils brought to the bar, and there stand without excuse, every mouth stopped, all of them guilty before God. On the foot of mere law, therefore, God might justly have dealt with us after our apostacy; and, by law, might have judged and condemned us all to yonder lake of fire and brimstone, to welter out eternal ages. Oh, the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of the love of Christ, which passeth all understanding! The law was holy, just, and good. He judged it so, he died to answer its demands. Nor did he ask our pardon, at his Father's hands on cheaper terms*."

GABRIEL. "How had it gratified the infernal hosts, lately banished the heavenly world, *by law*, to have seen LAW

* How infinitely shocking, to the inhabitants of heaven, would the work of our redemption appear, had Christ died to answer the demands of an unjust and wicked law? If the law, which requires sinless protection, on pain of eternal damnation, (Gal. iii. 10.) was a cruel, unjust, and wicked law, as some, who pretend to trust in the blood of Christ for salvation, are so inconsistent with themselves as to affirm,) it was infinitely wicked the Son of God should die to answer its demands. On this hypothesis, the work of redemption, instead of being the most glorious, would be infinitely the most shocking affair that ever happened.

set aside in favour of a fallen race! And how would they have triumphed to see the judge of the whole system respect persons, and have no regard to right! Better, infinitely better, all the human race had been for ever lost."

St. PAUL. "You speak the sentiments of all the saved. Had we been pardoned to God's dishonour, it would have sapped the foundation of all our joys. How much soever you pitied our case, you never desired our relief in such a way.

GABRIEL. "I remember well the day the news of your revolt first reached the heavenly world. We thought you all for ever lost, and approved the thing as just. We saw no way for your relief; nor shall we ever forget how things appeared; God's new creation all in ruins, and satan triumphing in his deed. But, O, the love of God to you! And, O, the boundless wisdom of him who sits upon the throne!"

MOSES. "So Israel once, for their idolatry, stood all condemned to death; *Let me alone*, the Almighty said, *that in a moment I may destroy them.* I knew the cause was just; and never shall forget how he wrought for his GREAT NAME'S SAKE."

GABRIEL. "That was but a faint image of this; for now a whole world lay in ruins, and satan and all his hosts in triumph were ready to say, *'Tis beyond the* ALMIGHTY *himself to disconcert our plan. His honour, law, and truth, oblige him to accomplish the thing we would, devote the world to death.*"

ADAM. "Now the full purport of those mysterious words, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*, once the foundatin of all my hopes, although but little understood, now their full purport all opens to view. On the cross, he spoiled principalities and powers, sapped the foundation of satan's hopes, and ruined all his hellish scheme. Since his exaltation, he has completed his whole design. Yonder now lies the old serpent, his head, although so replete with craft and poison, thoroughly bruised, and himself chained in the burning lake. But why am I among the saved? Never was there such an instance of free sovereign grace! Satan began rebellion in heaven, and I began rebellion on earth;

and why are we not now both together, in the same burning lake!"

ABEL. "There is my brother Cain, for ever lost. O, the sovereign grace of God to me!"

NOAH. "There are the inhabitants of the old world. They filled the earth with violence; were deaf to all the warnings of a long-suffering God; were destroyed in the general deluge: now weltering in the burning lake. O, the sovereign grace of God to me! Saved then in the ark; safe now in Christ."

ABRAHAM. "Such an universal deluge, such a dreadful destruction, one would have thought would never have been forgotten. But no sooner did mankind increase, but they turned their backs on God; and, in a few ages, all began to sink into idolatry. Then was I born in Ur of the Chaldees, where I might have lived and died estranged from God, and been now among the damned, had not God, of his sovereign grace, visited my soul, and called me from the idols of my native land. But, behold, now here I am, and here is Isaac, my son, and Jacob, my grandson, and thousands of my posterity in glory! Everlasting praise is due to free and sovereign grace."

St. PETER. "Yonder, in that lake of fire and brimstone, is Judas the traitor, once a follower of Christ, now doomed to endless wo. Oh, never shall I forget the black and gloomy night, when I cursed and swore, *I know not the man*, my blessed master! Nor shall I ever forget the kind look which brought me to repentance. Nor shall I ever cease to adore sovereign distinguishing grace, but for which I had now been with Judas in the burning lake."

St. PAUL. "But of all the saved, no instance of sovereign grace, like me*! Once a persecutor and a blaspemer.

* *Sovereign*; not because God acted absolutely without any reason at all, in converting a persecuting *Saul*, who was the worst of the two, and passing by the young man in the gospel; for infinite wisdom always acts on the highest and best reason; but because *Saul* was not chosen for his goodness, being *the chief of sinners*. 1. Tim. i. 15; yet God had wise ends in his choice. (See verse 16.) As no doubt he always has, although, in innumerable cases, they are absolutely beyond our reach. God has a right in this case, as the great *Sovereign* of the uni-

Never shall I forget the day I set out for Damascus, breathing forth threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the holy Jesus. But, O, the grace, the sovereign grace of God, that stopped me in my career; sent me to carry the glad tidings of salvation to the Gentiles, and gave me thousands to be my joy and crown of rejoicing, as it is this day!"

St. PAUL'S CONVERTS. "Once we were dead in trespasses and sins, buried in heathenish darkness, and even under the full power of the prince of darkness; and might now have been with him in wo. But, O, the sovereign grace of God to us, who sent his chosen vessel, and called us out of darkness into marvellous light, and now hath brought us to this world! Eternal praises to the Lord."

[Thousands and millions will speak the same language, and all join to prostrate themselves before the throne, and give all the glory and praise of their salvation to God and to the Lamb. And with the most fervent love and gratitude, attended with the deepest humility and reverence, devote themselves to God, through Jesus Christ, for ever and ever. And while all this is observed, very natural must the following reflections be:]

GABRIEL. "How is satan disappointed in every respect! And heaven become a more glorious and happy place than ever it was! I remember when there was nothing but love, order, and harmony, in heaven and earth. I remember when satan, a glorious, archangel, first broke order in heaven, rose up in rebellion againsnt the ALMIGHTY, and how he carried the infection down to earth. And I remember the horrible tragedies he has acted over, from age, to age, at the head of the powers of darkness, ruling in the children of disobedience, and filling the world of mankind with sin and wo; and the mighty opposition he has constantly made against the interest and kingdom of the Messiah; sometimes as a red dragon, thinking by fire and sword to bear down all before him; and then, as an angel of light, spreading delusions far and wide, not caring what shapes he put on, if, by any

verse, to do as he pleases. But he always does what is wisest to be done. *His sovereignty* is a *wise* and *holy sovereignty*, and an infinitely amiable part of his moral character. It is "God's glory." (*Exod.* xxxiii. 18, 19.)

means, he might attain his ends. But now his day is over; his designs are frustrated, his expectations disappointed, and his kingdom ruined. And, behold, yonder lies the monster chained in that burning lake, now the only place of his everlasting abode, weltering in horror, rage, and dreadful despair!

"If he hoped to bring our glorious monarch into contempt in his dominions, among his creatures, he is disappointed; for God is more loved, honoured, revered, extolled, and praised, than if these things had never happened. If he hoped to lessen his authority, and bring his law into contempt, that it should be looked upon a light matter to transgress, he is in this also disappointed; for never would it have appeared so infinitely heinous, and so shockingly dreadful a thing to transgress, if these things had never happened. Or if he hoped, at least, that the execution of divine vengeance would lessen the manifestations of divine goodness, and diminish the happiness of the intellectual system, he is also disappointed in this; for God has shown his wrath in such a manner as to render the riches of his glorious grace infinitely the more conspicuous in the sight of all the inhabitants of heaven; and their love and joy arise unspeakably higher than if these things had neve happened. Yea, all things have worked for good, and turned out well. His pride has been the means of a great increase of humility among finite intelligences, as it has led them to see what they might have come to if left of God. His fall has been the means of our confirmation; his ingratitude, of our being for ever the more sensible of the rich goodness of God; his setting up to be independent, the means to bring us to a more absolute and entire dependance on God, the only immutable being; and his aiming at supremacy, seducing mankind, and raising all this confusion in the system, has occasioned the ALMIGHTY to assert his supremacy, and set his own SON at the head of the creation, and in him to bring all things to an everlasting establishment, in a way most honourable to God, and the most advantageous to the system. So that he is disappointed in every respect. He *meant all for evil*; but lo, *God meant all for good*, to bring to pass as it is at this day.

"So all his successes have now at last ended in the eternal ruin of his cause; and his triumph, in eternal despair of ever again lifting up his head. And all the mischief he hath wrought, hath in fact brought down a ten-fold vengeance on himself, in yon lake of fire and brimstone, where he is doomed to lie, weltering under divine wrath, through endless ages, to exhibit to the view of all intelligences the evil nature and dreadful consequences of rebellion. Meanwhile, GOD and his MESSIAH reign, and will for ever reign. And thus *the seed of the woman hath bruised the serpent's head.* AMEN. HALLELUJAH."

Such will be the reflections of angels and saints after the day of judgment, when they have seen God's grand plan finished, and from those celestial regions look back and review the whole.

And now, who can doubt but that the humility, holiness, and happiness of the saved will be much greater, perhaps a thousand times, perhaps ten thousand times greater, than if these things had never happened? And how know we, therefore, that there may on the present plan, more honour redound to God, and more good to the system, on the whole, than if sin and misery had been for ever unknown; yea, almost infinitely more*?

Objection. "But was there no other way in which God could have made angels and men as holy and happy without the permission of sin?

Answer. No! Not if there were no other way in which he could so clearly and fully manifest, and so advantageously communicate himself to his creatures as this: for his creatures can neither be holy nor happy, but in the knowledge and enjoyment of him. Now, if I am not able to prove there was no way, yet the *objector* cannot possibly contrive a way in which God could have given such clear and full manifestations of himself, and communicate good to his creatures in

* The computations in page 67 are sufficient to clear the point. If but two-thirds of mankind should be saved, and their happiness be increased but an hundred fold, considering the greatness of their number, the overplus happiness in the whole must be *millions of millions of millions* of degrees; as any may see by calculation.

All which would not only be contrary to common sense, but appear to savour of so great perverseness, and be so very saucy and provoking, that his master would not think it needful to give any particular answer, but rather proper to punish him according to his deserts; for it must be plain to the servant at the same time, that idleness and deceitfulness were the things his master hated in him. And he must know he acted freely, and deserved the whip; and that it became his master to punish such a villain, not only because he deserved it, but also that his other servants might hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly. Nothing can be plainer than that the Jews acted freely in bringnig about the death of Christ. And it was one of the greatest crimes that ever was committed; and yet it came to pass according to the divine decree. (*Acts* ii. 23. iv. 28.) And none ever thought, because from all eternity God decreed the death of his Son, that therefore his agonies on the cross were pleasing to his Father, as one that loves to see others in misery merely for misery's sake.

Obj. "But yet, is it not a pity *any* are finally lost? Would it not have been better if *all* had been saved?"

Ans. It would, no doubt, be better for their own interest, if the rebels in any earthly kingdom would all come in and submit; and they would in such a conduct show more respect to their lawful sovereign. On which accounts their sovereign may send and sincerely invite and command them to return and submit, although he knows they will not, and is at the same time determined to do no more, but upon their obstinate refusal, (as the best thing that can be done,) to make them examples of his wrath, in the sight and for the instruction of all his dominions. Nor can any justly say, it is a pity he did not take more pains with them, or that it is a pity he punished them at last*.

* And might not such an earthly monarch send to such rebels and say, "As I live, I have no pleasure in your death." (*Ezek.* xxxiii. 11.) "I am long-suffering towards you, not willing any of you should be put to death, but that all should come to repentance" (2 *Peter* iii. 9.) And that with the utmost sincerity; although he knew their obstinacy was so great that they would not hearken; and although he was before determined to do no more, but, (as the best thing that could be done,) to proceed to their execution, for the vindication of his

Pharaoh had shown more respect to God, and it had been more for his interest, had he repented of his oppressions, and without delay yielded obedience to the divine command, and let Israel go. But no man has reason to think it had been better if God had said or done more to make him obedient, or that it was a pity God punished him at last as he did. [It was the best thing that could be done.]

Moses had beheld all his conduct; and Moses beheld the punishment the ALMIGHTY inflicted on him, and on his army: and what did Moses think? Did he think it was a pity that proud and haughty monarch was so brought down?—a pity, the cruel Egyptians were thus drowned? Or, did not the divine conduct appear perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty? Now, if none are finally lost but those who deserve eternal damnation, as really as Pharaoh and his host did to perish in the Red sea; and whose eternal damnation will turn as much to the honour of God and general good of God's chosen people, as did the destruction of Pharaoh and his host, and as much more as perfectly to answer to the greater importance of the case; it is not at all strange if their eternal damnation should appear, in the eyes of God, angels, and saints, through eternal ages, in as beautiful and glorious a light as did the destruction of Pharaoh and his host to Moses, when he composed and sang that song recorded in the 15th chapter of Exodus. The Egyptians thought it a pity their monarch and his army were lost; yea, to them it appeared a dreadfully

honour, and instruction of all his dominions! Surely, none ever thought but that an earthly sovereign may, in such a case, have a real and sincere regard to the welfare of his subjects, considered as men, although he is determined, as a wise governor, to "show his wrath" in their destruction, considered as obstinate rebels, after having "endured with much long-suffering." (*Romans* ix. 22.) Nor, did ever any doubt but that he has right to set bounds to his endeavours and to his patience, or that it becomes him to do so. (*Psalm* lxxxi. 8. 13.) And if God's conduct in giving up obstinate sinners is consistent with all the tender concern he expresses for them, his decreeing to conduct so is consistent too. If he acts consistently, it was consistent to determine to act so. It may be observed that, as the scriptures take it for granted, mankind are moral agents, and proper subjects of moral government, so do I in all the above reasonings. Nor is it needful I should enter particularly into this point again, after what has been already published. (See my *True Religion Delineated*, and *Sermon* on *Gal.* iii. 24.)

shocking affair. But Moses sang, *The* LORD *hath triumphed* GLORIOUSLY; and was exceedingly rejoiced to see that he had thus *shown his power*, and laid a foundation to have his *name declared throughout all the earth.*

And thus will it appear to all the inhabitants of heaven, when satan and all his adherents lie overwhelmed in the lake of fire and brimstone. And, therefore, the heavenly hosts are represented in scripture as *singing the song of Moses*; triumphing in the destruction of satan and his adherents, as Moses did in the destruction of Pharaoh and his army! (*Rev.* xv. 3.) And, as repeating their HALLELUJAHS, exulting and rejoicing while they see "*the smoke of their torment ascending for ever and ever!*" (*Rev.* xix. 1. 6.)

Nor need it seem strange that the inhabitants of heaven, who have so great a respect to God, and are such hearty friends to his interest and to the honour of his government, should so entirely acquiesce in the righteous punishment of his inveterate, obstinate enemies. If vindictive wrath were nothing but groundless, arbitrary vengeance, it would be quite another thing; but as it is, (in the governor of the world,) nothing but *love* to God, to virtue, to the best good of the system, bearing down, in a wise and righteous manner, the enemies of God, of virtue, and of the system, it cannot but appear infinitely amiable in the eyes of the inhabitants of heaven*. It is much more strange that any who heartily acquiesce in the gospel-way of salvation, should be stumbled at the final punishment of the wicked. It must be strange partiality in us, indeed, to acquiesce in the death of God's own Son, when standing in the room of sinners, and yet to object against the punishment of sinners themselves. It argues; either that we are very selfish, or else that we love the Son of God less than we do God's obstinate enemies, to be content

* Vindictive justice, if I mistake not, arises wholly from *love*, and is always under the direction of infinite wisdom. And if so, it is an amiable perfection in the Deity. *Love* is the sum of the moral law, which is a transcript of the moral perfections of God; therefore, *love* is the sum of God's moral perfections. Love to God, to virtue, and to the system, will naturally induce the governor of the world to punish those who are obstinate enemies to God, to virtue, and to the system, according to their deserts.

that he should bear the curse of the law, but loath that they should. The same views which cause the saints in heaven to acquiesce in God's setting forth his own Son to be a propitiation for sin, to secure the honour of the divine justice, at the same time lead them cordially to approve of the eternal damnation of obstinate sinners themselves.

Besides, to use the Apostle's own words, who was inspired by him who has a perfect view of all things, and knows what is best in so important a case. (*Romans* ix. 22.) "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endured, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?" What if God, who doubtless is the fittest judge, and to whom alone the decision of this affair belonged; what if God thought it best to single out some of his apostate creatures; some of his obstinate enemies, who inveterately hate him and his government, and, Pharaoh-like, bid him defiance: I say, what if God thought it best to single out some of these to be examples of his wrath; to be visible monuments of his justice and power, that the whole system might eternally see how infinitely he hates sin, and how easily he can subdue his enemies, and what a fearful thing it is to rise in rebellion against him; (*Verse* 23.) "and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had a-fore prepared unto glory;" that, by the means, he might set the infinite freeness and greatness of his grace, exercised towards the saved, in the most conspicuous point of light, who, in their destruction, will eternally see what they deserved, and must certainly have endured, but for the dying love of Christ, and sovereign grace of God? What if infinite wisdom has judged this the best plan? Who is there among all finite intelligences that has right or reason to object?

Obj. "But if this plan was really the best, why do not mankind now prefer it above all others, and heartily rejoice in it? Why so much murmuring around the world?"

Ans. It was but about an hundred miles from Egypt to Canaan, and, in forty days, conducted by ALMIGHTINESS, the Israelites might have marched from Egypt thither; and the Canaanites being all struck dead in one night, as an hundred

and eighty-five thousand once were in the Assyrian camp, (2 *Kings* xix. 35.) the Israelites might have taken immediate possession, and spent their days in feasting and joy. And had they been offered their choice, no doubt they would have preferred this scheme before their forty years' march in the wilderness; where the Lord led them through a land of deserts and of pits; through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death; through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt; and suffered them to hunger and to thirst, and for their murmurings under their trials, struck them dead by hundreds and thousands; for they generally cared only for their own present carnal interest, ease, and comfort. They had no relish to those things which God's heart was chiefly set upon; did not want to see God exalted; his authority established, or to be trained up to a life of entire dependence on God; to have their hearts humbled and broken, and be made to know that not for their righteousness were they brought into that good land; nor did they care any thing about that instruction which succeeding generations might obtain from their trials, and from God's conduct towards them those 40 years in the wilderness. And had Moses been able to open to their view the great and glorious ends which were likely to be answered, they would soon have replied, "And what good will it do us if all the earth is filled with his glory, and if all these ends are accomplished, and if it will be better for the nation in the long run? What good will all this do us, so long as our carcasses fall here in the wilderness? It had been better for us to have lived and died in Egypt. Yea, we had rather never been born, than to undergo what we undergo, and die here at last." Nor had it been in the power of Moses to have stopped their mouths, unless he could have changed their hearts. Yea, notwithstanding all that God himself said to them, they continued murmuring in their tents, till he was obliged to execute terrible vengeance upon them. *Fourteen thousand* and *seven hundred* were struck dead at one time. (*Numbers* xvi. 49.) "*Now all these things happened to them for our ensamples, and they are written for our admonition.*" (1 *Cor.* x. 11.) It were better, therefore, if mankind would leave murmuring at God's ways, which are undoubted-

ly all wise, whether any mortal in this present dark and imperfect state is able to show the wisdom of them or not. If all that has been said appears to have no weight, and we give up God's plan as being at present absolutely inexplicable, yet, from the infinite wisdom of the Deity, it is capable of strict demonstration, that of all possible plans he has chose the best; therefore, the fault is not in him but in us. That there were none to be blamed, in the case of the Israelites, but themselves, we now can plainly see; so will it appear at the day of judgment, that God always did right, and acted wisely; and then every mouth will be stopped. And since we are certain this will finally be the case, it infinitely better becomes us to cease our murmurings, and learn to justify God, and take all the blame to ourselves; and as we are invited, so without delay to cast away the weapons of our rebellion, return and submit to our rightful sovereign, through Jesus Christ, now while mercy is offered to us.

But if any haughty sinner, Pharaoh-like, says, "Who is the Lord? I know not the Lord, nor care for his authority or government, nor will I humble myself before him;" let such a haughty wretch know that the ALMIGHTY is above him, and can accomplish all his schemes without his consent; for having endured, with all proper long-suffering, such impudent sinners, he can show his wrath and make his power known in their eternal destruction, to the honour of his name, and to the eternal instruction of the saved.

As for those who leave the honour of God, the infinitely great and glorious God, the author, proprietor, and king of the whole system, absolutely out of the account, as a thing of no importance, and what the governor of the world is not at all concerned about, and imagine that the good of God's creatures and subjects is the only thing to be attended unto, in all the divine conduct, as moral governor of the world; as for such, I say, it is impossible to reconcile any part of God's plan to their fundamental maxim; for if nothing was of importance but the creature's good, why was not that solely attended to? Why were all put on trial? And why eternal destruction threatened for the first offence? Or ever threatened at all? Or the sinning angels expelled the heavenly world, and the human race all doomed to death for *the first*

transgression? And if our good is all that God now has in view, why have not more pains been taken for our recovery, from age to age, from the beginning of the world? Yea, why are not infinite wisdom and almighty power effectually exerted to render all eternally happy? For the saved, if this principle is true, will be eternally grieved to see any of their fellow-creatures for ever in hell-torments. Nor can the eternal torments of the damned answer any valuable end, on this hypothesis.

Strange are the positions which *the Chevalier* RAMSEY has laid down, in order to reconcile the divine conduct to this notion. He maintains that "God did not certainly know that his creatures would fall; and if he had known it, he could not have hindered it consistently with their free agency. He has been trying ever since to reclaim them; intends to continue in the use of means till he has reclaimed them all; the torments of hell being the most powerful means of grace, are finally to be used, with such as cannot otherwise be reclaimed, merely out of pure love to the damned, to purify and bring them to a better mind; so all at last shall be recovered and made for ever happy!" But if God meant to use the most powerful means with a fallen world he possibly could, and that in every age, as upon that hypothesis it must be supposed, why did he send but one NOAH to the old world? Why not two or three thousand? Why did he raise up but one MOSES, and but one ELIJAH, and send them only to the Israelites?—Why did he not raise up thousands in every age and nation under heaven, and make thorough work? And why does he not take more pains with us of this age? Raise up thousands as well qualified to preach as St. Paul? And pour out his spirit on all flesh, as he did on the 3000, on the day of Pentecost? If our good was all he had in view, and he really intended to save us all, one would think he would *now* use the most powerful means to reclaim us, and not stay till the day of judgment, and then doom us to hell, in order to fit us for heaven! Besides, at that great day, a guilty world will find that Christ does not come to enter upon the use of further means to recover the wicked, but to give them their final doom. Christ will not come to save a guilty world,

but to judge them. Not clothed with love, but in *flaming fire*. Not to do them good, but to *take vengeance*: (2 *Thes.* i. 8.) Not out of love to them, but to *show his wrath*: (*Rom.* ix. 22.) Not to purify them, but to cast them, like worthless *chaff*, into *unquenchable fire*: (*Matthew* iii. 12.) Not to fit them for, and finally to bring them to heaven, with the good wheat, but as *tares to burn them up*: (*Matthew* xiii. 30.) Not aiming at their good, as vessels of mercy, but aiming at their *destruction as vessels of wrath*: (*Rom.* ix. 22.) Not to discipline them for a season, but to *punish them with everlasting destruction*: (2 *Thes.* i. 9.) send them into *everlasting fire*; (*Matthew* xxv. 41.) into *everlasting punishment*, (*Verse* 46.) where *the worm never dies, and the fire is not quenched*, (*Mark* ix. 44. 46. 48.) but the smoke of their torment *shall ascend for ever and ever*. (*Rev.* xix. 3.)—And the eternity of hell-torments will effectually convince the whole system that God has an infinite regard to something else besides merely the good of his creatures; as it is meet and fit he should. (See *Mal.* i. 6. 14.) And this part of his conduct will help to complete his picture, and finish his true character, in the eyes of all intelligences. As yet, mankind hardly believe him in earnest. Words do not answer the end; but actions speak louder than words, and will work a thorough conviction.

As for the common plea, that "God needs nothing from his creatures, and so can only aim at their good;" it is a way of reasoning contrary to the universal sense of mankind, in all cases in any measure analogous. The father does not require honour from his son, merely because he needs it, but because he deserves it. The master does not require reverence from his servant, merely because he needs it, but because he deserves it. And if the one should despise his father, and the other treat his master with contempt, they would soon feel the force of that reasoning, in *Mal.* i. 6. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master. If, then, I be a father, where is mine honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts." (*Verse* 8.) "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or ac-

cept thy person? saith the Lords of hosts." (*Verse* 14.) "Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a GREAT KING, saith the Lord of hosts."

Nor is there any way to establish that maxim which yet lies at the foundation of almost all the modern schemes of religion, but to prove, either that the Deity does not deserve supreme honour or that the moral governor of the world is not just; for if he deserves it, he ought to have it. And it belongs to the moral governor of the world to see justice done, *i. e.* to see that every one has his due.

And, indeed, it is the chief happiness of the inhabitants of heaven, to see God universally honoured, and each one to join to give him the glory that is his due. They incessantly cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of thy glory." (*Isaiah* vi. 3.) "They fall down before the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, *Thou art worthy to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*" (*Rev.* iv. 10, 11.)

If the honour of God is of infinite importance in itself, then it is infinitely desirable for itself; and then to see God honoured and exalted, will be of all things most happifying to holy intelligences; and that plan which is suited to this, will be the most happifying plan; and there may be the greatest degree of happiness on such a plan, and yet all things be so contrived as that it may eternally appear in the most striking light, that there was something God had an infinite regard to, besides the happiness of his creatures. On this hypothesis all the parts of God's present plan may be accounted for.

But if the honour of God is of no importance in itself, then it is not desirable for itself; nor will it be a happifying sight to see God exalted; nor that plan that is suited to exalt God, a happifying plan; yea, no good end can be answered by such a plan; and so no part of God's present plan can be accounted for.

If the creature's happiness is the *only* thing of worth, then infinite wisdom and almighty power should be employed *only*

to promote it; and the everlasting punishment of the damned can answer no good end; as, on this hypothesis, none can deserve it, nor can God desire it, or any holy being acquiesce in it, or receive any instruction from it*. And why God ever permitted sin or misery to enter into this world, will be absolutely unaccountable; as will every step God has taken with fallen intelligences ever since satan's apostacy; for why did not God instantly restore fallen angels and fallen man, and immediately confirm them, if their welfare was the *only* thing of worth?

In a word, I humbly conceive this position, that *the welfare of creatures is the only thing of worth, and the only thing to be regarded by the moral governor of the universe*, is one of the most groundless, irrational, unscriptural positions, that ever was laid down; little, if any thing short of, nay, worse than the grossest absurdities practised by the *heathen*; for what did they worse than "*worship and serve the creature more than the Creator?*" (*Rom.* i. 25.) But on this hypothesis, the *creature* alone *is to be served*; and God himself, the glorious creator, is to become his almighty *servant*; and to be loved only and merely for his faithfulness in the creature's service. The creature has taken the throne, and the Creator is become his servant. No wonder such a scheme suits the heart of fallen creatures. And its being ever broached, or ever received in God's dominions, by any of his creatures, is a full demonstration that they are fallen indeed. Yea, not only fallen, but sunk into so great degeneracy and delusion, as to think that God himself is fallen too, and quite turned to be of their side. And now they love him, and think all is well! (*Psalm* l. 21.) "Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself."

But it is time to proceed, as was proposed,

III. To make some practical improvement of the whole. And,

1. What has been said may be of use to assist us to form right ideas of God. The law gives us a true picture of the moral perfections of the divine nature. God is exactly what the law speaks him to be; yet the gospel sets his moral

(*See this proved in my *True Religion Delineated*, vol. i. page 260.)

perfections in a still clearer light; the glory of God shines exceedingly bright in the face of Jesus Christ. But God's universal plan, comprehending law and gospel, and all God's dispensations from the foundation of the world to the final consummation of all things, sets his moral character in the completest and most striking point of light; and puts us under vast advantages, even in this present state, to make a swift progress in the knowledge of the Deity. Indeed, had we that high relish for divine knowledge; that good taste for divine beauty which they in heaven have, our proficiency might bear a great resemblance to theirs. But, Oh, how stupid are we to divine things! Having eyes to see, and see not; ears to hear, and hear not; neither do we understand; hearts of stone, that have no feeling. We are even as beasts before him; so that while his glory shines all around us, we are in profound darkness. Oh, for the influences of the blessed spirit, to awaken our attention to the manifestations he makes of himself, and to give us a true taste and relish to the beauty of divine things! Then would our hearts be enlarged to love the Lord our God, and to fear him, and to walk in all his ways, and to rejoice in the wisdom of his universal government. Oh, for that blessed day, when we shall receive the holy spirit in a full and perfect measure! Then shall we see no longer in this dark manner, but, as it were, face to face; shall, in a measure, at once, take in the idea which God has exhibited of himself, and be ravished with the wisdom, glory, and beauty of his universal plan.

2. What has been said, may be of use to assist us not only to form right notions of all finite intelligences as being, in their best estate, at an infinite remove from self-sufficiency and absolute independence; the peculiar prerogatives of him who alone is by nature immutable: but it may also be of special use to assist us to form just notions of the true character of mankind now in their fallen state. Facts are stubborn things. The steady conduct of mankind, from the fall to this day, gives their true character beyond dispute. Only think what they ought to be, perfectly in love with God, and full of love to one another; and see what their conduct has always been towards God, and towards one another. Towards God—"Ye

do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the just ONE; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." (*Acts* vii. 51, 52.) Towards one another—"Living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." (*Titus* iii. 3.)

"Who live in hatred, enmity and strife,
"Among themselves, and levy cruel wars,
"Wasting the earth, each other to destroy;
"As if, (which might induce us to accord,)
"Man had not hellish foes enough besides,
"That day and night for his destruction wait."

MILTON.

And so obstinate in their sinful ways, that, in fact, no external means have ever been able to reclaim them; so alienated from God, that no arguments can persuade them to be reconciled; so that notwithstanding all the outward means which have been used, yet still the world is as it was. The christian nations very little better, if so good, as some heathen have been. (*Matthew* xii. 41.)

3. What has been said may be of use to realize to us the infinitely evil nature and dreadful consequences of sin. Let us view the lake of fire and brimstone, and see what will be the issue of the grand rebellion. Sin has turned angels into devils, and banished them from heaven, and will confine them for ever to the burning lake, with all their adherents from this apostate world. Let us view God's conduct towards sin, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things, and we may see how infinitely he hates it, and how resolved he is to suppress it. Oh, how infinitely dreadful had been our case in this fallen world, had a Saviour never been provided!

4. What has been said tends to give us the sublimest ideas of the divine interposition on the fall of man, to defeat satan's designs, and bring infinite good out of all the evil that satan intended. O, the depth of the knowledge, wisdom, and grace of God! Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders! This theme is worthy of eternal contemplation,

and will appear new, and fresh, and ravishing, through eternal ages, to all the blessed inhabitants of the upper world; especially to the BRIDE, the LAMB'S WIFE. The saved from among men will have some ideas and joys peculiar to themselves, that even the elect angels will not intermeddle with; and "sing a new song, that none can learn but those who were redeemed from the earth." *Rev.* xiv. 3.

5. What infinite madness are the sons of men guilty of, that they can be inattentive to all this glorious grace; go on secure in sin, and persist in their adherence to satan's interest, although they know that satan and his hosts, and all his adherents, are destined to the lake of fire and brimstone? "O poor, blind, infatuated creatures! to adhere to satan, our first enemy, who so maliciously sought our total ruin, deceived the happy pair, and plunged all this world in wo! to be deaf to the kind calls of the son of God, who means to defeat satan's designs, and has died in the cause, and now reigns in heaven with the same views, and invites us all to submit to his government and trust in his blood! And can you still go on, in bold defiance of almighty vengeance, and make a jest of eternal burnings?" Oh, how horrid the thought! infinitely horrid the thought, that so many of the human race are daily imprecating damnation upon themselves; calling upon God to damn their souls to hell! Poor creatures, they little think what damnation means! they little think what it is to fall into the hands of the living God? Who that loves God, or has any compassion for immortal souls, can think of the present blind and miserable state of a fallen world, and not long for the blessed day when satan shall be bound, and the Messiah reign on earth?

6. But let me conclude the whole with an address to the spiritual seed of Jacob.

As Jacob was in great distress, when his son's coat, all besmeared with blood, was brought into his presence, and said, "Surely he is rent in pieces, and I shall see him no more!" and afterwards, when Simeon was left in Egypt, things looked darker still, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now will ye take away Benjamin also? All these things are against me!" and yet, in the end, he saw the wisdom,

beauty, and glory of the whole plan which God had laid: So shall it be here. How dark soever the present state of the world is, and how dark soever it has been for long ages past, that it has hardly looked like God's world, but rather like a world where satan reigns; and how impossible soever it may seem that all should issue well; yet we have the greatest reason to believe it will, and to rejoice in the prospect of that blessed day. For this is the very plan which infinite wisdom chose before all other possible plans; the very plan which God himself laid out; all the parts laid out upon design; every thing adjusted by infinite wisdom. The whole, therefore, must be perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty; and will appear so, when once it is finished.

Look through the lesser parts of God's great and universal plan; his dispensations to Jacob and Joseph, to Moses and the Israelites of old; these, although once very dark, are now full of light, and easy to be understood. And if God's works are wise and beautiful, so far as we can understand them, this argues the whole are so. For doubtless all are of a piece, the Author being the same, and always acting like himself.

Besides, notwithstanding the dreadful state of the world in our day, and in all ages past, there may be time enough yet, before the day of judgment, for such great events as may put quite a new face upon the whole. Nor need we doubt the accomplishment of these great events, because they have been so long delayed. It is God's way to promise, and make his people wait; but he was never known to disappoint their expectations. To Adam he said, "*The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.*" Adam lived above nine hundred years, and looked, and waited, and died; but it was above eleven hundred years after his death before God ever so much as mentioned his ancient promise. All his posterity on earth, eight only excepted, destroyed, meanwhile, in the general deluge. That some, perhaps, were ready to think God had quite forgot his promise; till, in the days of Abraham, it was renewed. Again they look; but still it does not come; but long, dark ages intervene, and his people are put to wait about two thousand years more. And then, behold,

it is come! the joyful day is come! "*I bring you tidings of great joy,*" said the angel, "*for this day the Saviour is born.*"

I see not why the predictions of the glorious days are not as full and as plain as were the predictions of the Messiah; nor why we may not as firmly believe the setting up of his kingdom, as of old, they believed his coming in the flesh. It is certain this is a great objection of the Jews against our Jesus being the true Messiah, that the things prophesied of the Messiah have never been fulfilled in him. That *the nations should beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and learn war no more. And that there should be nothing to hurt or offend; the knowledge of the Lord filling the earth, as the waters do the seas,* &c. &c. Nor do I see any possible way to answer their objection, but to say, these things are still to be accomplished.

And if they should be accomplished in all that GLORY, in which they are painted in the prophetic descriptions, nothing hinders but that this plan, of all possible plans, may at last actually prove to be the best; in all respects the best. Most for God's glory, and most for the good of the system too; yea, so far as we are able to see, it seems as if this must be the case.

It is matter of the greatest joy, that all the affairs of the universe are conducted by infinite wisdom. It is an honour that belongs to God, to govern the world which he has made; to govern his own world; to lay out and order the affairs of his own family. We think we have a right to lay out schemes for our own families, and should take it ill if our children or servants should dispute our right. Sovereign monarchs, in time of war, think they have a right to lay out a plan of operation for an ensuing campaign, and would take it ill if their right should be disputed by a private soldier. Much more has God a right to lay out an universal plan, for the conduct of all things, in a world to which he has an original, underived, absolute right; nor can he look upon the worm that dares dispute his right, but with infinite contempt and detestation. And, O what matter of infinite joy it is, that he has taken this work upon himself! not left things to the devil's control; nor to be decided by the lusts of an apostate

world; nor left all things to mere chance; but himself, in infinite wisdom, has laid out an universal plan; a plan perfect in glory and beauty. No mortal, that loves his plan, will think of disputing his right to lay it. And no mortal, that loves God himself; that loves his law, and loves his gospel, can be an enemy to his universal plan; for they all partake of the same nature, and shine forth in the same kind of beauty; *holy, just,* and *good.*

O ye seed of Jacob! Joseph is safe, and Benjamin is safe; the honour God is safe, and the good of the system is safe; all is in good hands, and under the conduct of infinite wisdom. For *the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.* (Isai. xlvi. 10.) Wherefore, set your hearts at rest. For let the state of the world and of the church look ever so dark, you may safely *trust in the Lord,* and *stay yourselves upon your God,* who is engaged in honour to conduct all well: and, for his GREAT NAME'S SAKE, he will not fail to do it. (See *Ezek.* xx.) You therefore, may, with the utmost serenity, leave the government of the world with him, and put an implicit faith in his wisdom and fidelity, and have nothing to do but your duty. Nothing, but to attend upon the business he has marked out for you; like a faithful soldier in an army, who trusts his *general* to conduct affairs, while he devotes himself to the business he is set about; and the more he rejoices in the wisdom of his *general,* the more alert will he be in discharging the duties of a soldier. Wherefore *rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say, rejoice.* Let this be your first maxim, *The Lord reigneth;* and this your practice, *Let the earth rejoice.* (*Psalm* xcvii. 1.)

But it must be with an holy joy; with such a joy as results from a supreme love to God, and hatred of sin, as an infinite evil: with such a joy as St. Paul describes, (1 *Cor.* xiii. 6.) *Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but in the truth:* for no other joy will answer to the nature of God's universal plan, which is altogether suited to exalt the Deity, and set sin in an infinitely odious point of light, and to cause *truth* and *right* universally to take place.

There are some *who say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of satan:* who say they trust in the Lord,

while, at the same time, *the name of God is blasphemed* through their unrighteous and ungodly lives. So once there was a mixed multitude came out of Egypt, and joined in the general joy at the side of the red Sea, merely from selfish views; but the Lord knew how to try them, and their joy, ere long, was turned to murmuring. For their hearts were not yet right; and their carcasses fell in the wilderness.

O, ye seed of Jacob! trials, many trials are yet to be expected: dark and gloomy days, while the dawning light of the glorious morning comes gradually on. Get ready, therefore, for trials. Be willing that *all flesh should be brought low, and that the Lord alone should be exalted.* (Isaiah ii. 17.) *Seek meekness, ye meek of the earth, for it may be, ye may be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.* (Zeph. ii. 3.) *For, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name, shall the Son of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings.* (Mal. iv. 1, 2.) *Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.* (Dan. xii. 4.) *Many shall be purified and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand: but the wise shall understand.* (Verse 10.) Blessed is that man who shall overcome all trials, and be true to the Messiah's interest through all changes; for *he shall stand in his lot at the end of the days,* in the general assembly of the just in heaven. (Verse 13.) *Watch, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.* (Luke xxi. 36.)

Humility, self-diffidence, entire dependance on God, the inward source of constant watchfulness and prayer, perfectly become us, and are exactly suited to the state of things in the intellectual system. Satan, a glorious archangel, fell; Adam the father of the human race, fell; all mankind are now in a fallen state; the powers of darkness determined on our ruin. No room, therefore, is left for pride, self-confidence, self-dependance. Hell is our proper due; and free grace, through Jesus Christ, our only hope. Snares and dangers

are all around us. *Watch and pray,* therefore, *that ye enter not into temptation.*

GOD is the only being by nature immutably good. Were we innocent, we might possibly fall; and God would be unobliged to hold us up. Now we are sinners; now we are already fallen creatures; there is no hope in our case, but we shall totally and finally fall, if left to ourselves, and as certainly perish as we now exist. And whither shall we look for help, but to the only immutable Being? And how? but through the means and mediation of Christ; being infinitely unworthy that God should hold us up. And yet our eternal interest lies all at stake.

"O, THOU FATHER of our spirits, amidst ten thousand dangers, apostate, self-ruined, self-destroyed, helpless, hell our due, we look to thee! O, help us! O, hold us up! O, keep us, by thy power, through faith unto salvation; to the glory of thy free grace through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Now to him who loved us and gave himself for us, to him be glory, honour, and praise, for ever and ever. AMEN.

THE

WISDOM OF GOD

IN

THE PERMISSION OF SIN,

VINDICATED;

IN ANSWER TO A PAMPHLET, ENTITLED,

AN ATTEMPT, &c.

He is the Rock; his work is perfect: For all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he. DEUT. xxxii. 4.

PREFACE.

If the divine *conduct* towards the intellectual system can be *vindicated*, there will be no room for any *dispute* about his *decrees*. If God always *does* what is *best* for him to do, his *decreeing* from eternity to do so, cannot be objected against: unless we can suppose it to be *wrong*, for God to *determine* upon a *conduct* in all respects *right*. All God's decrees primarily respect his own conduct. *First*, what a world to create. *Secondly*, how to behave towards his creatures, in every particular circumstance. For, "God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence." The whole of the divine conduct towards *intelligent* beings, after they are brought into existence, may be arranged under these two general heads. (1.) What he *does*. (2.) What he *forbears to do*. For instance: He placed our first parents in the garden: he forbid them to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, on pain of death. These things he *did*. He did not hinder the serpent from tempting, nor our first parents from eating. These things he *forbore to do*. If he always has a good *reason* for doing what he does, and for forbearing what he forbears; then his *whole conduct*, as comprehending both, is *justifiable*.

To vindicate the conduct of the Holy One of Israel, was the design of my *sermons* on *the wisdom of God in the permission of sin*. But the author of the *Attempt*, not believing that God has done so well in this affair as he might have done, has undertaken to write *against*—Against *whom*? against *me*? No: rather, to write against his Maker. For he does not deny the *fact*, viz. that God *permits sin*; but endeavours to prove, that God in this, as well as in some other things, has *not* done "what was most for his own glory." So that the design of the following pages, is not to vindicate *myself*, but to vindicate the GOD that made us all. I have certainly the *best side* of the question; and could I do justice to the subject, I might expect the approbation of all the friends of God. For, as a dutiful child loves to hear the

righteous cause of his injured father pleaded; so does every true Christian, every real child of God, love to hear the works and ways of the Holy One of Israel justified. And even when they cannot fully see the *reasons* of the divine conduct, they are disposed to believe that he has done *well*; because he is an absolutely perfect Being, who cannot err. Nor do I know how to be so uncharitable to the author of the *Attempt*, as to suppose that he will, on second thoughts, in good earnest abide by what he has published. Rather I hope, his belief that "supreme wisdom *cannot err*," will finally prevail over his doubts, that "God does in fact what is *not* most for *his own glory*."

A

VINDICATION

OF

THE WISDOM OF GOD

IN THE

PERMISSION OF SIN.

INTRODUCTION.

THAT God permits sin, is plain fact, cannot admit of dispute, and needs no proof. Or if any should be so weak as to deny the fact, it may be easily proved. For all acknowledge that sin is in the world; but if God had interposed, and effectually hindered its ever coming into the world, it never would have been. That he did not interpose and effectually hinder it, is therefore as certain, as that sin is now in the world. And God's *not hindering* sin, is what I call his *permitting* it. And this fact, *that God permits sin*, gives rise to this question, viz. *Is it wisest and best, that God should conduct as he does in this affair?*

Had we a comprehensive view of God's universal plan, and a perfectly holy taste, the whole of the divine conduct towards the intellectual system, of course, must appear to us now in this world, perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty; as, it is acknowledged, it will to all holy beings at the day of judgment. But as the evil and dreadful consequences of sin to us at present engross our attention, and the good to be brought out of evil, how great soever it may be, is almost entirely out of sight, to be sure, to the generality of men; and not at all suited to please a vicious taste, were it in ever so clear a view; it is no wonder if it be very difficult to bring a guilty apostate world to think well of the divine conduct in this affair. And yet if we once conclude, that the Holy One of Israel has not

done what is most for his own glory, nor what was wisest and best to do; we must inevitably give up the absolute perfection of the divine nature, which will overturn all religion by the roots.

To say, "that *secret things belong to God*, and we ought not to think of this part of the divine conduct; nor is it our duty to believe it to be wise, or to acquiesce in it, as such;" will not satisfy a pious judicious mind. Indeed, were it a *secret thing*, and had we no evidence of the fact, it might justly put an end to all our inquiries. But God's permitting sin is in truth *no secret thing*. It is *revealed*, it is as open and manifest as that God made and governs the world. It is often, very often, held up to our view in the holy Scriptures, by God himself, on purpose that we might think of it. And it is acknowledged on all hands, that it is our duty to *search the scriptures*, and take special notice of what we find written there, and meditate on every part of divine conduct therein held forth to our view; since the whole is calculated and designed for our instruction. 2 *Tim.* iii. 16. And as it is an acknowledged fact, that God has permitted sin in millions of instances, from the beginning of the world to this day, and will continue to do so through eternal ages; so there is no avoiding a view of his conduct, but by the greatest stupidity, or shutting our eyes in the most obstinate manner. Nay, this will not do it; we cannot but think of it sometimes in this world, and shall for ever think of it in the world to come. And we must approve or disapprove; for it is so interesting an affair, that we cannot stand neuter. If we disapprove now, and for ever, we cannot acquiesce in God's ways in this world, nor join the heavenly hosts at the day of judgment, in saying, *Amen Hallelujah*. And God, of necessity, must look upon us as enemies to him and mal-contents in his kingdom, and treat us accordingly. It is therefore of the last importance that we approve. But if God's conduct is not wise, it is not our duty to approve of it. Rather we ought to be sorry, and lament that God has done as he has. Which would suppose him to be to blame. And which would imply that he is not an absolutely perfect being. And if so, he is not God. And if there is no God, all religion is overthrown. Therefore we must

believe the divine conduct to be wise. But how shall this belief be obtained? *Firstly* and *chiefly*, by an implicit Faith in the absolute perfection of the divine nature. Which, *Secondly*, may be strengthened, by a view of the wisdom of such parts of the divine conduct as we can more fully comprehend. Which, *Thirdly*, may be still more confirmed by right views of the true nature of God's universal plan. All these I have endeavoured to lead my readers to attend to, in my *sermons on the wisdom of God in the permission of sin.*

And had the author of the *Attempt* carefully attended the subject, as I had stated it, and entered thoroughly into my reasonings, I should naturally have been led to review the whole, and to retract or confirm, as light and truth appeared. But this he has not done; but rather, to use his own words, according to his professed design, he has exerted himself to the utmost to set out the doctrine, "if possible, in all its horror and deformity." (p. 8.) So that what I have to do, is to take off this *ill dress*, and array it in its *native beauty*; that the divine conduct in the permission of sin may not be blasphemed by ignorant and wicked men through his means; and the moral rectitude of the divine nature given up, to the subversion of all religion. Nor shall any thing in his piece that needs an answer, pass unconsidered.

SECTION I.

Several particulars, wherein the author of the SERMONS *on the Wisdom of God in the permission of Sin, and the author of the* ATTEMPT, *are agreed.*

WE should always exactly state the point in controversy before we begin to dispute. Wherefore let us see how far this author agrees with us; that the point of difference may be made to stand out in clear view. And,

1. We agree, that sin is in the world, and that dreadful have been the consequences for above 5000 years. And it is likely to issue in the eternal ruin of great multitudes of God's creatures.

2. We agree, that sin is the very worst of evils in its own nature, and it naturally tends to evil, and only to evil; to dishonour God, and ruin the system.

3. We agree, that the eternal ruin of such great multitudes of God's creatures, considered in itself, is an infinitely dreadful thing.

4. We agree, that all the sin and misery, that has, or ever will take place in the system through eternal ages, (how infinitely dreadful soever the whole must appear to one who has a perfect comprehensive view of it all at once,) even the whole lay open, full, and plain to the divine view, before God created the world. And that he had as full, perfect, and lively an apprehension of it, before he began to create, as he ever will have to eternal ages.

5. We agree, that, if God had pleased, he could have hindered the existence of sin, and caused misery to have been for ever unknown in his dominions, with as much ease, as to have suffered things to take their present course.

6. We agree, that God knew with infallible certainty, that things would take their present course, and issue as they will issue, in the eternal ruin of millions, unless he himself should interpose, and effectually hinder it.

7. We agree, that God did, as it were, stand by, and take a perfect view of the whole chain of events, in which his honour and the good of his creation was infinitely interested: and in a full view, and under a most lively sense of the whole, did deliberately forbear to interpose effectually to hinder the introduction of sin into his world, when he could have hindered it, as easily as not.

8. We agree, that angels and men were under the greatest obligations to love and obey God, and were left to their own free choice: and that God was not obliged, in point of justice, to do any more for them than he did. And that the whole blame lies at the creature's door: and that God is righteous in punishing his sinning creatures, according to the declarations of his word. All these particulars I had asserted. None of them has he denied. Nor does it appear that we differ in any of these things.

SECTION II.

The grand point in controversy exactly stated.

THE grand point of difference is precisely this: "I believe that the infinitely holy and wise God, in every part of his conduct, relative to the intellectual system, does that which is really wisest and best for him to do; most for his glory and the good of the system, in the whole; and therefore, that God's present plan is, of all possible plans, the best; most for his glory, and the good of the system." On the contrary, the author of the *Attempt* believes, that "God is not obliged to do, and that in fact he does not do, that which is most for his own glory, or most for the good of the system; and is fully persuaded that the present plan is so far from being the best, that it had been infinitely more for the glory of God, and the good of the system, if sin had never happened."

In the sermons he objects against (p. 95, 96.) It had been said, that "from the perfections of the divine nature alone, we have such full evidence, that he must always act in the wisest and best manner, as that we ought not in the least to doubt it. Before the foundation of the world, this system now in existence, and all other possible systems, equally lay open to the divine view, and one as easy to the almighty as another. He had his choice; he had none to please but himself. Besides him there was no Being: he had a perfectly good taste, and nothing to bias his judgment, and was infinite in wisdom. This he chose: and this, of all possible systems, therefore was the best, infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude being judges."

But the author of the *Attempt* esteems this reasoning quite inconclusive, as it proceeds on a false hypothesis. "A fallacy," he says, to suppose that God "must necessarily always will and do that which is most for his own glory." A point he does not believe, "that in fact he always does," or that "he is obliged to do it." He thinks it plain in the works of creation, that God has not done what would have been most for his own glory, and that he might have done much better.

Which emboldens him to argue, that in the works of providence, he did not mean to do his best. (p. 12, 13.) And he attempts to prove at large by 9 arguments, that it had been much better, in the whole, more for God's glory and the general good of the system, if sin and misery had been for ever unknown. (p. 20—24.) And if it had been better for God to have hindered sin, it was not wise in God to permit it.

So that this is the fundamental and most essential point of difference, and that on which the whole controversy, between him and me, turns, *viz. Whether the whole, and every part of the divine conduct, be agreeable to infinite wisdom.* Or, in other words, *whether God means in the whole, and every part of his conduct, to do that which he knows to be for the best, most for his glory, and the good of the system on the whole.* For we both agree, that God always knows what is for the best, and never acts under mistake. So that the only question really is, *whether God always means to do, what he knows to be for the best on the whole?* For if he does, the grand point is proved. The *wisdom of God in the permission of sin* is demonstrated. And it is in vain to raise objections against that which infinite wisdom knows to be best. It is proud and arrogant, it is impious and blasphemous, for a worm of the dust to dispute against his Maker. *Isai.* xlv. 9. *Rom.* ix. 20.

SECTION III.

God, who is a Being of infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude, always conducts agreeably to his own most glorious perfections; that is, in the most wise, holy, and perfect manner.—Particularly in this case.

WE are agreed, that this affair of the permission of sin was an infinitely important affair. And, indeed, considering it in all its consequences, there, perhaps, never was a more important affair that God ever had to decide. It involved in it the welfare of the angelic world, and the welfare of the whole human race; the honour of God was infinitely concerned in the affair; yea, the very life of God's own Son did, as it were,

lie at stake: for if sin was permitted, the Son of God was to die. That if God ever thoroughly considered and weighed any affair whatever, no doubt he did this. And, if ever he was concerned to act according to his best judgment, (if I may be allowed to use such a phrase,) in any one case, no doubt he was in this. And if God is an absolutely perfect being, it was simply impossible, that he should conduct, in this infinitely important affair, contrary to the light of his own mind, and the joint declaration of all his perfections, infinitely to his own dishonour, and infinitely to the damage of the system, absolutely without any motive so to do; yea, against infinite motives to the contrary. Nay, to suppose, that God would deliberately and voluntarily, absolutely without any motive, suffer his *own* creatures to sin; when he knew it would be, on the whole, infinitely better for him to hinder it; is, in the most bare-faced manner, to give up the moral rectitude of the divine nature.

Did the inhabitants of heaven view the divine conduct in the permission of sin, in this blasphemous light, and firmly believe God to be such a being, instead of crying, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory,* as they did when God gave up Israel of old to blindness of mind and hardness of heart, (*Isai.* 6.) they would rather sink down into amazing grief, and fill all heaven with loud lamentations.

And saints on earth, instead of singing their ancient melodious song, *the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof;* might rather, if these things were so, with the captive Jews, hang their harps on the willows, put on sackloth, sit down in sorrow, and refuse to be comforted.

A firm belief of the infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude of the divine nature and government, is essential to the very foundation of all true religion. For it is the very reason of our love to God, of our joy in him, rejoicing in his universal government, acquiescing in all his dispensations, even those which we cannot understand, and of our cheerful obedience to all his commands. If, therefore, we give up this belief, we

must give up all religion: and shall be in as bad or worse condition, than if we believed there were really no God.

And this doctrine of the wisdom and rectitude of the divine government, is also the very foundation of that doctrine plainly taught in scripture, and universally believed by all Christians, viz. That at the day of judgment the righteousness of all God's ways will be made manifest to all the world, and the wisdom of all his conduct cleared up before the intellectual system, to God's everlasting honour, to the joy of all holy beings, and to the eternal confusion of all God's enemies. (*Jude* 15.) For then will the Lord come *with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them; of all their* HARD SPEECHES, *which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.* But if God's ways have not in fact been wise and good, they cannot, at the day of judgment, when all things will be brought to light, appear to be so. If God has done wrong, (heaven forbid the blasphemy!) all the world will know it then. And if God had deliberately and voluntarily acted contrary to his better judgment, in this infinitely important affair of the permission of sin, absolutely for no good end at all, and absolutely without any motive, it will then appear before the eyes of angels, men, and devils, to God's eternal reproach, to the eternal grief of all his friends, and to the eternal triumph of all his enemies, who will be glad to see the being, they most of all hate, fall under blame, as well as themselves.

If this were the case, it would be, (for aught I can see,) more for God's honour, that there never should be a day of judgment, and that the truth of things never should come to light. Yea, it had been better if God had never made the world.

And now does the author of the *Attempt* in very deed believe all this horrid blasphemy; that he should blame me so much, for being so confident, that all God's conduct is wise and good; and his present plan, of all possible plans, the best! For, why should he blame me so much for my belief, unless he is strong in the belief of his own scheme!

A DIALOGUE

Between A. *the author of the* ATTEMPT, *and* B. *the author of the* SERMONS *on the Wisdom of God in the permission of Sin.*

A. No. I abhor this blasphemy with all my heart. I firmly believe that all the divine conduct is "good, right, best." "Right in matter, manner and aim;" the result of "supreme wisdom, which cannot err." But, I affirm, that sin is "no part of God's scheme; but a device of the devil." "God's original scheme was to have all holy and happy." The devil has disconcerted it by his rebellion, and God is heartily grieved. Did I believe "the present scheme to be God's, I should think it extremely dangerous opposing it; and that it would argue the highest vanity, arrogance, and impiety." (p. 13, 14, 15, 16. 24, &c.)

B. If by "sin not being God's scheme, but the device of the devil," you mean, that God did not voluntarily permit sin; but that the devil brought it in, in spite of all that God could do to hinder him; why do you maintain, that God did not mean to do, in this affair, what he knew was *most for his own glory?* For, according to this, God exerted himself to the utmost, to secure his own glory, and the good of the system too; and would have obtained his end, had not his almighty power been overmatched by the devil. This, therefore, cannot be your meaning; unless you would be inconsistent with yourself

If you only mean that *the devil sinned, and not God;* I grant it. But the question still remains unanswered. Pray, therefore, tell me, why did the infinitely wise and almighty God permit such a glorious angel as satan once was, ever to devise such mischief? ever to perpetrate so shocking a deed? a deed pregnant with infinite and eternal woes! Pray tell me plainly, did God act wisely in this affair, or did he not? He had some end in view, or no end. Not no end: for that would reflect upon his wisdom. If some end, it was a good

end, or a bad one. Not a bad one: for he is a most perfect being. Therefore it must be a good one. That is, when God determined to permit sin, upon a full view of the whole affair, he knew it wisest and best, to permit it; i. e. he knew that plan in which so much sin and misery should take place, would be better, on the whole, than a plan in which sin and misery should for ever be effectually prevented by his constant interposition. And if he knew this to be the best plan, it was doubtless his "original" plan: for an infinitely wise and perfect being, who "cannot err," would originally choose what, upon the whole, he knew to be the best*.

A. "This is what, I conceive, I have a right, as a man and a Christian, to oppose." (p. 4.) It is a mere "fallacy" to pretend, "that the present scheme is most for the glory of God; because he must *necessarily* always will and do that which is most for his own glory." I think you much to blame for being so "positive." For my part, I do not believe, "that God does in fact, or that he is obliged to do, what is most for his declarative glory." (p. 12, 13.) And I can prove by a variety of arguments, that it had been better, infinitely better, infinitely more for the honour of God, and the good of the system, if sin had never been. (p. 19. 24.)

B. What! plainly contradict yourself so soon, my friend! However, pray do give me an instance wherein infinite wisdom ever erred; and wherein God did not do what was on the whole most for his own glory.

A. It is plain God might, have made the world much better than he did. And if, after he had made the world, he had hindered the existence of sin, it had been infinitely more to his honour, and to the good of the system. (p. 12, 13. compared with p. 20—24.)

B. Pray how, then, do you think the whole of the divine conduct will appear at the day of judgment? If not only his

* This is not a point peculiar to calvinistic divines; but as strongly asserted by men of learning in general. "If the author and governor of the world be infinitely perfect, then, of all possible systems, he hath chosen the best." "That is, the system in which the greatest quantity of happiness and perfection obtains, that can in the nature of things take place." "This is the joint doctrine of reason and revelation." Dr. *Turnbull, Chris. Phil.* p. 35. 47.

works of creation are defective; but if, in this infinitely important affair of the permission of sin, God has done what he knew was not for the best; permitted sin, when it had been infinitely better, if he had hindered it.

A. I am of the opinion, that, at the day of judgment, all God's works and ways will appear to be good. "Full day will be then poured on all the ways and works of God; to the unspeakable joy of those who now heartily acquiesce in the dispensations of supreme wisdom; and humbly admire and adore, where they cannot fully comprehend." (p. 31.) For, I firmly believe, that all the divine conduct is the result of "supreme wisdom which cannot err." (p. 14.)

B. Dear Sir, what do you mean? All the divine conduct the result of "supreme wisdom which cannot err?" So that "all his works and ways will bear the light of full day?" And when brought into the clearest view, will appear to be "the dispensations of supreme wisdom," worthy to be "heartily acquiesced in" by all wise and holy intelligences, with "unspeakable joy." Although they will see in the clearest light, that God has made and governed the world in such a manner, as he himself knew was not for the best, not most for his glory, nor most for the good of the system! What! will all holy beings at the day of judgment, think it *best*, that God has *not done best*; and *wisest*, that he has *counteracted his wisdom!* And *most glorious*, that he should do what he knew was *not most for his glory*, and for the good of the system! And humbly admire and adore his acting contrary to his own infinite wisdom, holiness, and goodness, as firmly believing this was the result of "supreme wisdom which cannot err!" Pray explain yourself on this point.

A. What I say is really true. "Supreme wisdom cannot err." "So far as God has been concerned in the transactions of the system, they must be good, right, best." But "sin is no part of God's scheme, but a device of the devil." (p. 14. 16.)

B. Very well, sir. And do I understand you now? Do you really mean, that God in permitting the devil and other wicked beings to do as they do; that God in *this* has done what was indeed, "*good, right, best?*" For if God's conduct

is but approved of, (you may condemn the devil as much as you please,) my point is gained; the *wisdom of God in the permission of sin* is acknowledged. Pray speak plainly.

A. Indeed, sir, "I do doubt, whether God does in fact, and therefore whether he is obliged to do, what is most for his declarative glory." (p. 13.) And I do believe, it had been infinitely better if sin had never been. (p. 20. 24.)

B. Why then do you profess firmly to believe, that the whole of the divine conduct "is good, right, best;" and that "supreme wisdom cannot err?" And that "all the divine dispensations are to be heartily acquiesced in, as being supremely wise?" (p. 14. 31.) How can these things be consistent?

Had you, sir, justified your Maker, fully acknowledged the *wisdom of God in the permission of sin*; and wherein my solutions of difficulties appeared to you not sufficient, had you given better; still endeavouring to justify the ways of God to men, and to assist the people of God in their belief of the wisdom of all the divine conduct; and so to animate their love, and quicken their obedience; you had merited the thanks of the public, and the love of all pious people, and might have been approved of, even in heaven. But, do you think, Almighty GOD will be pleased, to have his conduct in the permission of sin disputed against, and set in the "most horrible, deformed light possible," by one of his own subjects, who ought to love him, approve of all his ways, and plead his cause, in this revolted world? Or do you expect, that the friends of God in heaven or earth, will be suited with your ATTEMPT, who are all united in believing concerning God, as it is written in *Deut.* xxxii. 4. *He is the rock, his work is perfect. For all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he?*

A. Whether what I have published, is consistent or no, I should be extremely glad of a reply to my objections. (p. 30.)

B. A full reply to almost all your objections has been already given; partly in Mr. *Edwards* on *Liberty*, partly in my *sermons* on the *Wisdom of God in the permission of Sin*, and still more fully in Mr. *Hopkins' Sermons* on *Rom.* iii. 5. 8. to which you may be referred.

A. But there is one argument, on which I lay great weight. Yea, on which I build my whole scheme, viz. that as "God does not in fact, so he is not obliged to do, what is most for his declarative glory." An argument you have none of you answered. I have expressed it in these words, viz.

"It is allowed by all, that God is infinite in power, and that space is infinite. Now here is evidently room for endless displays of divine glories. In no definite period of time, in no given quantity of space, can there be a full discovery of God's glories; because they are absolutely infinite. And therefore may we not with the utmost safety affirm, there is not now such a display? We know there is *now* a greater display of God's various natural and moral perfections, than seven thousand years ago: for there are now multitudes of rational beings, which then were not; and an infinity of other objects, in which are surprising manifestations of wisdom, power, and goodness, &c. Had God been obliged to make as great displays, as he could of his perfections, he must from eternity have produced into existence all possible beings; the contrary of which is evident. And may we not be naturally led from this to doubt, whether God has so much glory from the things which now exist, as he might have had? Especially when we consider the obvious defects and blemishes there are; and can easily imagine how these might be corrected by infinite wisdom." (p. 13.)

B. True, sir, we have none of us answered this argument. Nor did we expect it would be used by any in this country, as I believe, it never was before. It has often been used by professed atheists, in other countries; who, from the pretended defects of the natural world, have argued that it could not be the work of an absolutely perfect Being; and so that we have no evidence that there is such a Being. And it has been abundantly answered by some of the most learned writers in our nation, in their attempts to establish the belief of a God, i. e. of an absolutely perfect Being.

Suffer me, sir, to give you two or three short extracts out of Dr. *Cudworth's intellectual system*, where, writing in confutation of *Atheism*, he says, "Their *first objection* is against *providence*, as to the *fabric* of the world, from the *faultiness*

of the *Mundane system*, intellectually considered, and in order to ends; *quia tantâ stat prædita culpâ*; that, *because it is so ill made*, therefore it could not be by a *God*. Where the *Atheist* takes it for granted, that whosoever asserts a *God* or a *perfect mind*, to be the original of *all* things, does, therefore, *ipso facto* suppose *all* things to be *well made*; and as they *should be*. And this doubtless was the sense of all the ancient *Theologers*." (p. 875.) As in some modern *Theists*, who pretend to solve the difficulty by saying, "*quia Deus non tenetur ad optimum, because God is no where bound or obliged to the best*," he shows the absurdity of their scheme, p. 873, &c. In p. 874, he says, "God is an *impartial balance, weighing* out heaven and earth, and all the things therein, in the most just and exact proportion, and not a *grain* too much or too little of any thing. Nor is the Deity therefore *bound* or *obliged* to do the *best*, in any way of *servility*, much less by the law and command of any superior, but only by the *perfection* of its own *nature*, which it cannot possibly deviate from, no more than *ungod* itself. In *conclusion*, therefore, we acknowledge the *Atheist's* argument to be thus far good; that if there be a God, then of necessity must all things be *well made*; and as they *should be*; and *vice versâ*. But no *Atheist* will ever be able to prove, that either the whole *system* of the world could have been *better made*, or that so much as one thing therein is made *ineptly*."

And having spent several pages in answering various objections of *atheistical* writers against the works of *creation* and *providence*, he concludes the whole, (p. 899,) in these words: "And now, having fully *confuted* all the *atheistical grounds*, we confidently conclude, that there is one only *necessary existent*, the cause of all other things; and this an absolutely perfect Being, infinitely good, wise, and powerful; who hath made all things that were *fit to be made*, and according to the *best wisdom*, and exerciseth an exact *providence* over all." Thus far Dr. *Cudworth*.

And this, doubtless, is the belief of Christian divines in general, of whatever denomination. To be sure, Dr. *Whitby* is full in it. These are his words: "As it would be in us an intolerable piece of insolence to say, against the plainest declar-

ations of the *scripture*, that God did not in wisdom make the world, because we are not able to discern the wisdom of all things framed in it; so must it be an equal insolence in us to say, God doth not act in the preserving it, and in the ordering of affairs in it, according to the measures of true goodness, because we cannot dive into the reasons of his dispensations." See Dr. *Whitby's Discourses*, 2d edit. p. 495.

To which let me add a short extract out of Dr. *Turnbull's Christian Philosophy*, p. 35. "The creation of an all-perfect mind must be the image of its Creator; and therefore it must be perfect, it must be chosen by infinite wisdom and goodness as the most perfect system, that is, the system in which the greatest quantity of happiness and perfection obtains, that can, in the nature of things take place; and this being the case, all the seeming imperfections and evils in it, are such only in a partial view; and with respect to the whole system they are goods."

Yea, Mr. *Chubb* himself, though justly numbered among *infidel* writers, had juster notions of God's moral character, than to think, that God might do better than he does. These are his words: "I shall take it for granted, that God is, and that he is necessarily, an immense, eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, a self-sufficient, and an unchangeable Being. This being allowed, from hence it will follow, that as God is always capable of doing what is most *worthy* and *valuable* in itself, and which in the nature of things, is *right, good, best*, and *fittest* to be done, seeing he knows wherein the goodness, fitness, and valuableness of every action lies: so he *always will act thus*, because right, good, fit, &c. are so very beautiful, and excellent in themselves; and are so preferable, in the nature of things, to their contraries, that they always will afford a *proper* and *sufficient motive*, &c." *Tracts*, p. 252.

But to come to a more particular consideration of your argument, the grand argument on which your whole scheme is built; yea, the only argument you use, to prove that God *might* permit sin, although he knew it was not for the best; not most for his glory, or the good of the system: and that therefore we can have no certainty that he *would not*, from

the absolute perfection of his nature. And this, in a few words, is the sum of it.

God in the work of creation has not done his best, but might have done infinitely better. If this be so in one instance, it may in another. Therefore we can have no assurance, from the absolute perfection of the divine nature, that God means to do what is best in his works of providence; but have reason to think he might have done infinitely better.

Well, if it be really so, that God does not *mean* to order the affairs of the universe in the best manner, I have had too good an opinion of God, and have put too much confidence in him. And I must learn, for the time to come, to have lower thoughts of God, and higher thoughts of myself. I must begin to think myself a suitable judge, to set up and censure God's works and ways, and point out wherein he might have done better; not in the least suspecting, that God is wiser and better than I am, and more able and willing to order things for the best; or that it savours of arrogance and pride, for a worm of the dust, to say to the infinitely wise God, "In *this*, O Lord, and in *that*, thou mightest have done better. Had I been at thy right hand, chief director, I could have laid a plan for a better natural world, and for a better moral system." Not once imagining, that God may have wise reasons for all his works and all his ways, which lie beyond my reach; but rather confident, that he had no good reason; because I see none. Wherefore I may venture safely to censure, as unwise, any steps of divine providence, the wisdom of which I do not see. And so, the more blind I am to the wisdom of the divine ways, the more faults I may find, and the more fully point out the divine *errors*. And so, God must no longer be esteemed as always acting agreeable to infinite wisdom; because I cannot see it; and, in the vanity of my mind, I am entered into a way of thinking and reasoning, that is the result of the greatest folly, and pregnant with the grossest blasphemy.

A more particular answer to your argument is, sir, I humbly conceive, really needless. For, if I can imagine to my own fancy, a better natural world, and a better moral system; yet, as I do not know that my own imaginations are right, I have

not the least reason to call in question the wisdom of the divine conduct; unless I put more confidence in my imaginations, than in "supreme wisdom which cannot err." But you expressly own, that you "cannot pretend to prove to a demonstration, that the present scheme is not the best." And merely because I cannot see the reason and wisdom of God's works and ways at once, to doubt, whether God has acted so wisely as he might have done, just as if he might not have good reasons in view, which never entered into my mind, becomes me, neither "as a man or a Christian." We, who do not see the whole of God's universal plan, nay, not the millionth part of it, are not in a capacity to pronounce it a bad plan. It becomes us rather to put an implicit faith in the divine wisdom; and to believe it to be good, because it is God's. I a little wonder, sir, how you dare so freely censure the works and ways of God, your Maker and final Judge!

A. "Could it be made appear, that the present scheme is *God's*, I readily own it would be extremely dangerous opposing it: and argue the highest vanity, arrogance and impiety." (p. 13, 14.)

B. Very well, sir, and don't you know that the natural world is wholly the work of *God*? God, and God only, was the creator of the universe. The devil had no hand in the work of creation. And yet, here you *oppose*, "dangerous" as it is. Yea, here you *begin* your *opposition*. Here you discover such *defects* and *blemishes*, and can easily imagine how things might have been better done; the world might have been created much sooner and larger; and, it seems, you think, infinitely better on the whole; infinitely more to the glory of God, and containing infinitely more happiness. So that, for aught appears, you have nearly or quite as low an opinion of the natural, as of the moral world; and could mend the one as easily as the other. Yea, from God's no more consulting his own glory in the works of creation, you are led to doubt whether he has consulted it, so much as he might have done, in the works of providence.

But this arguing, you see, is directly and professedly against *God's* works, and that considered as such. And yet you say, "If it could be made appear that the present

scheme is *God's*, it would be indeed extremely dangerous opposing it." But let the danger be greater or less, you have ventured to *oppose*, and censure the works of creation, which you own to be *God's* work. Yea, and finding the works of creation so little to the glory of God, to what they might have been, you are induced to doubt, whether God means always to do that which he knows would be most for his own glory. And from this grow bold to think, that God might, consistent with his perfections, permit sin, (a thing he has done, not merely once, but persisted in every day, hour, and moment, near six thousand years, in almost an infinite number of instances,) when, he knew, that on the whole, it would have been infinitely more to his honour and the good of the system, if he had hindered it. And so, at last, really give up the moral character of the Deity. For, it is capable of strict demonstration, that infinite wisdom cannot err. Find *one error*, therefore, in all God's works, and it will prove to a demonstration, that he is not infinitely wise. Much more, if you find an *error infinitely great*, and *persisted in for almost six thousand years*.

A. Sir, I proposed this "with the greatest humility." (p. 13.)

B. Pray, but how does it look, to make a *proposal* "with the greatest humility," which is of such a nature, as that the *proposer* himself at the same time, is obliged to own must argue "the greatest vanity, arrogance, and impiety!" And then, by the mere strength of such a proposal, to attempt to overthrow the wisdom of God's universal plan, even to the ruin of the moral character of the Holy One of Israel!

If to all this you should reply, "This way of reasoning does not convince me; I cannot believe a work is done in the wisest and best manner, and most for God's glory, merely because *God has done it*. If it is arrogant and impious to object, yet I feel inclined to object, and must do it. I DO DOUBT, WHETHER GOD ALWAYS DOES IN FACT, AND THEREFORE, WHETHER HE IS OBLIGED TO DO, WHAT IS MOST FOR HIS DECLARATIVE GLORY:" I say, if you should make this reply, pray suffer me, without offence, to desire you to read, *Isai.* xlv. 9. *Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker. Let the*

potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. It may *do*, sometimes, my friend, for worms of the dust to find fault with the works and ways of their fellow-worms; but it is "extremely dangerous" to find fault with the works and ways of the GREAT JEHOVAH. Besides,

You often insist, "that we should acquiesce in that account of things we have in Scripture." But the Scripture no where leads us to think, that God, in the works of creation or providence, ever does "what is not most for his own glory:" but every where to the contrary. Yea, we ourselves are required, "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God." And can we at the same time imagine, that God allows himself, in the most important affairs, to do "what is not most for his own glory?" Would God have us aim at his glory more than he himself does? Besides, the Scriptures inform us, that when God had finished the work of creation, and surveyed the whole, he pronounced it all to be "very good;" notwithstanding all the objections you have to make against it. And the pious psalmist cries out, *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all.* Psalm civ. 24.

A. But why did not God "from eternity produce into existence all possible beings?" Would not this have displayed his perfections more fully, and to better advantage? (p. 13.)

B. Is there not an absurdity in the notion of *creating from eternity?* Yea, does it not imply a contradiction, very evidently, to say, that any being might have been brought into existence from eternity? For if it was from eternity, it was *always* in existence; and so could never have been brought into existence.

A. I did not mean strictly "from eternity." But there is no "period of time" can be mentioned, in which God might not have created the universe. (p. 13.)

B. According to Scripture, *in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* Then TIME began. Strictly speaking, there was no *time* before; nothing but *eternity.*

But you will say, *God might have created the world SOONER.*

"*SOONER!*" Pray in what sense? Not *nearer the*

beginning of eternity: for eternity never had a beginning. Not *so soon,* but it might happen, that the world should be just as old as it is now, when it was no older. Not *so soon,* but that the inhabitants of the earth, about five or six thousand years after the creation, might, with as fair show of reason as can now be pretended by any object, and say, *why was not the world created SOONER?* Not *so soon,* therefore, as to obviate this difficulty, any better than it is at present.

A. But God might have brought "all possible beings" into existence at once; which would have given a greater display of his perfections. (p. 13.)

B. I believe, that God knew exactly how large it was *best* to create the universe; and in what order to bring beings into existence, so as in the *wisest* manner to answer the *best* ends. And, I believe, he created it exactly to *his mind;* for he meant to please himself. *Rev.* iv. 11. *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for THY PLEASURE they are, and WERE CREATED.*

And how know we, dear sir, if God thinks best to have a larger number of intelligences to behold his glory, and be happy in him, but that he judges it best not to bring them into existence, till the present "grand Drama" shall be finished, at the day of judgment? That they may, without sharing the hazard of the present confused state of things, reap the benefit of the whole, through eternal ages; while angels and saints may be appointed their instructors, to lead them into the knowledge of all God's ways to his creatures, and of all their ways to him, from the time of satan's revolt in heaven, to the final consummation of all things. And so, as the Jewish dispensation was introductory and preparatory to the Christian; so this present universe may be introductory and preparatory to one, after the day of judgment, almost infinitely larger*. That this will be the case, I do not pretend so

* If the divine conduct, on the present plan, is perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty; then the present plan may be a good introduction to as many future systems, as God pleases: till the whole sum of good is raised to the highest possible degree. Or rather, the knowledge, humility, holiness, and happiness of

much as to conjecture. But I firmly believe, that what is best, on the whole, that infinite wisdom always has done, and always will do: and here I rest.

I will only add, that the death of Christ, and the work of our redemption, gives a display of the divine perfections, infinitely fuller; and shows *what God is* in an infinitely clearer and brighter manner than the creation of systems. It is a small thing with the *Almighty* to create worlds; a work scarce worth our notice, or worthy ever to be thought of, compared with the work of redemption by the death of his Son. To be sure, God himself, who is infinitely the best judge, views things in this light. *For, behold!* (saith the Lord, speaking of this very thing,) *I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.* Isai. lxv. 17.

The Son of God only spake a word, and the *old creation* came into being: an easy work! But for the *new creation*, all his glory must be laid aside; he must put on the form of a servant, groan in the garden, and die on the cross! And as his thus dying was a work infinitely greater than speaking a word; so the *new creation* will be proportionably more glorious than the *old*. As it is written, *for, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.* But this greatest and most glorious of all God's works, could never have been, had God interposed and prevented the existence of sin. Did you, sir, view the work of redemption in the light of Scripture, surely it must give you a different idea of God's universal plan. Nor could you, if you love what God loves, think so meanly of that, which to God appears so infinitely glorious.

A. But I have many arguments to prove, that it had been

finite intelligences may continually augment, with the greatest celerity, through eternal ages; while system after system comes into existence under the best possible advantages for the swiftest progress in all divine improvements. But if God has missed it in the beginning of his works, there is a foundation laid for ill thoughts of him to be handed down to all succeeding systems, through eternal ages, if any such should ever be. And the damage of what is past can never be repaired. If our author's hypothesis is true, it seems as if it would be a pity that any more worlds should ever be created, to come to the knowledge of their Maker's dishonour. Yea, a pity the present system ever came into being.

infinitely better, infinitely more to the honour of God, and good of the system, if sin had never been. Yet it is plain fact, God has permitted sin to be. Therefore it is certain, God does not always mean to do that which is best, (p. 13. compared with p. 19—24.)

B. However, according to your own concession, all your arguments do not amount to a demonstration. For you say, "that you cannot pretend to prove to a demonstration, that the present scheme is not the best." (p. 5.) But we may be as certain that infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude cannot err, as that *two* and *two* make *four*. Now to attempt to confute, what we are certain to a demonstration is true, by arguments we are sensible fall short of demonstration, is very weak. And to give up the infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude of the divine nature and conduct on such grounds, how can it be but inexcusable impiety? To censure the conduct of civil rulers, known to be men of superior abilities, and of great integrity, when we are not under advantages to enter into the secrets of state, or to know scarce any of the reasons they act upon, is always deemed arrogant and wicked. Much more must it be so here: as we have the greatest certainty, that the supreme ruler of the universe is a being of infinite understanding, and of perfect rectitude; and as we are at an infinite remove from a full comprehension of his grand universal scheme.

A. I grant this reasoning looks plausible, and that "some pious conscientious persons may have been induced to believe" the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, by it; (p. 25.) but it does not convince me. For if once I should believe, that it was wisest and best in God to permit sin, most for his glory and for the good of the system; I should feel myself under a necessity to look upon sin as being *in its own nature* a good thing, for the glory of God, and good of the system; and that God delights in it as such. And that, therefore, instead of hating sin, mourning for it in ourselves, lamenting it in others, we ought rather to esteem it as really a good and virtuous thing; and as such to rejoice in it, and even to keep an everlasting jubilee in remembrance of satan's revolt, and Adam's fall: events so infinitely glorious! (p. 16,

17, 18, 19.) Absurdities so shocking, that I never can believe them.

B. And *absurdities*, let me tell you, that if you did but understand the scheme you are opposing, you would know, are so far from following from it, that they are absolu tely inconsistent with it.

For the doctrine of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, supposes sin in itself, and in all its natural tendencies, to be infinitely evil, infinitely contrary to the honour of God, and good of the system. For herein consists the wisdom of God in the affair, not in bringing good out of good, but in bringing infinite good out of infinite evil, and never suffering one sin to happen in all his dominions, but which, notwithstanding its infinitely evil nature and tendency, infinite wisdom can and will over-rule to greater good, on the whole. So that all these objections are without weight.

For sin in itself, and its natural tendencies, being just as evil as though God never meant to, and in fact never did, bring any good out of it, is as much to be hated for its evil nature and tendency, to be repented of in ourselves, and lamented in others, mourned for, watched, and prayed, and preached against, as if no good was ever to be brought out of it.

Just as if it was in the affair of Joseph. It was a vile, an impious and barbarous thing, for his brethren to do as they did. Hateful in itself, and in the eyes of God, and of all good beings. And to be mourned for, and lamented, and testified against, as such. It was dishonourable to God, whose authority they despised, and whose design to advance Joseph they intended to frustrate. Cruel to their aged pious father, and barbarous to their brother. And in fact, *they were verily guilty;* as their consciences testified, in the day of their distress. (*Gen.* xlii. 21.) And if after all this, contrary to their intentions, great good comes out of this affair, no thanks to them for that. They were still *verily guilty;* and even every whit as much to blame, as ever; and had as great reason for godly sorrow, and true repentance; as is plain to the weakest capacity. I appeal to the common sense of all mankind.*

* In Gen. xlv. 5. Joseph speaking to his brethren, says, *now therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither. For God did send*

A. Sir, I am of another opinion. I affirm, that, "if sin is the occasion of greater good, in the whole, there is no reason to repent of it." (p. 18.) "For it ceases to be sin." (p. 19.)

me before you to preserve life. Which *Pool* thus explains: "*Be not grieved,* to wit, immoderately, &c. he doth not dissuade them from godly sorrow. *Nor angry with yourselves.* In the Hebrew it is, *neither let there be anger in your eyes;* i. e. neither excessively torment yourselves with the remembrance of the fact, neither break forth into contentions and wrath, and upbraidings of one another. *For God did send me before you to preserve life;* i. e. God by his wise, powerful, and gracious providence, over-ruled your evil intentions to an happy end, &c. which though it doth not lessen your sin, yet ought to qualify your sorrow." See *Pool* on the place.

N. B. Joseph's brethren had been for some time in external circumstances very distressing; their minds full of heaviness and grief from that quarter; and they ready sometimes in their anguish to be angry at, and upbraid one another, for what was past. Which kind of grief was not of the nature of godly sorrow. And this was what Joseph referred to. He would not have them grieve and afflict themselves, &c. in that sort; for that all was brought to a happy issue. He did not mean to dissuade them from godly sorrow. He knew, the more they saw of the wisdom, holiness, and goodness of God in this affair, the more would they love him, and loath themselves; and mourn after a godly sort, that they had endeavoured to counteract him. The more beauty they saw in God's scheme, the more would they hate their own, which was designed to frustrate his.

God's scheme was to advance Joseph, &c. Their proud hearts could not endure it. They viewed him as having a native tincture of vanity. They envied him, and wanted to keep him down, and laid a scheme for it, which God overruled, directly contrary to their very hearts. Now for them to look upon God's scheme as glorious, must imply in its very nature, that they looked upon their own scheme with the utmost abhorrence; which must suppose deep humiliation and sincere repentance. They could not really and heartily like God's scheme, without a sincere abhorrence of their own. Nor can any one being in the system heartily like God's scheme in permitting sin in general, without a sincere abhorrence of sin in general; and a hearty desire that all sinful schemes may be frustrated, just as this was, which Joseph's brethren had laid; for this is God's design. Had Joseph's brethren, before they were deeply humbled, been let into God's scheme, to see what he had done to advance their brother, their envy would have revived; and they felt an inclination to lay some new scheme to take him down. They must be deeply humbled, before they would heartily approve God's scheme, and be willing to bow to Joseph. But let their proud hearts be humbled, and they love their brother as they ought; and they would be glad to see him exalted, and would be ashamed to think of what they had done, and cheerfully pay him the honour which was his due. So a perfectly humble and holy temper would lead us perfectly to acquiesce in God's universal plan, which is designed to exalt God, and make all his happy subjects feel their comparative nothingness, to the highest possible degree, that *God may be all in all.* See this illustrated at large in my *Sermons.*

B. You affirm so, it is true. But it is impossible, if you will consider the case, that you should believe so. Pray, tell me, was it not a sinful thing for Joseph's brethren to sell their brother? Or for the Jews to crucify the Lord of glory? Because God, in both cases contrary to their design, brought great good out of these great evils. I appeal to your own conscience.

A. Nay, but if you appeal to me, I must frankly tell you, that if greater good is brought out of evil, we are not to be sorry, but rather to rejoice that we have sinned. This principle I take for granted, as self-evident. And on this hypothesis I build my reasoning. (p. 17, 18.)

B. Then, it seems you think, that Joseph's brethren had no cause to repent of their sin, in attempting to frustrate God's design to advance their brother; because in spite of all their malice and envy, God over-ruled all they did to bring about his designed advancement to the best advantage. Their sin, you say, "God in infinite wisdom over-ruled for the advancement of Joseph; the preservation of Jacob and his family; and a train of the most happy events to the church of God, from that day to this." (p. 6.) To which you add, "It must be confessed, much of the divine power, wisdom, goodness, &c. was displayed in bringing so much good from such treachery." Therefore Joseph's brethren ought, instead of sorrow, rather to "keep an everlasting jubilee," in remembrance of their malice, envy, cruelty, and impiety, exercised in that deed. This is one of the "pernicious consequences," not of mine, but of your own scheme. Nor can it be got rid of, as to those instances of sin, which you acknowledge God has over-ruled to greater good. And as you own "you cannot prove to a demonstration but that greater good will finally be brought out of all sin, in general; so upon your scheme you cannot be certain, that you or any other sinner has reason to repent of sin. You do not know, as yet, whether to be sorry, or glad. Yea, according to you, "it is above your, or perhaps any human talents," to decide this question. (p. 5, 6.) Therefore, upon your scheme, all sinners must put off their repentance, until, by some new revelation from heaven it is declared, that God never will over-

rule all to greater good. And as soon as ever we are assured, that God does not intend to over-rule all things to his glory and to the good of the system; then, and not till then, must we begin to be sorry that we have sinned: that is, to be sorry that we have not sought the glory of God and good of the system, with all our might. But why should we be sorry now? For, if God does not seek his own glory, why should we? If he does not aim at the general good, why should we? ought we to be more holy than God himself? No: the utmost extent of our duty is only *to be perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.* So that, finally, your scheme, in whatever light considered, will exclude true repentance out of the world. However, there is this comfort by the way, that your scheme is so plainly inconsistent with common sense, that it can never be believed by a rational creature. To suppose that my sin is lessened, because, contrary to my design, good is brought out of it by another Being, let the good be ever so great, instead of being self-evidently true, is really self-evidently false.

A. "Can that be evil which exactly coincides with the divine will?" (p. 19.)

B. The Jews did nothing, but what God's *counsel determined before to be done*; as the apostles, full of the Holy Ghost, expressly declare, and that even in their prayer to God. (*Acts* iv. 28.) And they tell the Jews in so many words, *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by WICKED hands have crucified and slain.* (Acts ii. 23.) Which very doctrine the spirit of God set home on the consciences of their hearers, and they were *pricked at the heart*, in a sense of their sin and guilt; and cry, *what shall we do?* and the apostles call upon them to *repent*. But do you, sir, verily think, that the Holy Spirit, these divinely inspired apostles, and their converts, were all inconsistent with themselves! and will you contradict the spirit of God, the apostles, the primitive converts, and the universal sense of mankind, rather than not oppose the wisdom of God in the permission of sin!

A. "How an infinite holy Being could lay a plan, which

was infinitely wrong and wicked to execute," I cannot conceive. (p. 16.)

B. You will doubtless readily own, that the following plan was laid by "an infinitely holy Being:" because you have it from his own mouth. Exod. xiv. 1, 2, 3, 4. *And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel; that they turn, and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdul and the sea over against Baal-Zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.* But why? *For,* (says the holy One of Israel, who knew what the consequence would be,) *Pharaoh,* when he hears where you are encamped, *will say of the children of Israel, they are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.* They cannot escape. I have them at my mercy. *And I will,* by this circumstance, *harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them, and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host: that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.* Here was a plan laid by an infinitely holy Being, which was infinitely wrong and wicked for Pharaoh to execute." However, he did execute it. Ver. 5. *And it was told the king of Egypt, that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? And he made ready his chariot and took his people with him.* And what was the issue? *They sank like lead in the mighty waters.* And Israel sang, *the Lord hath triumphed gloriously.* And thus God ordered things as he did, professedly on design, that Pharaoh might do as he did. And when he had done what God intended he should do, he wrought a miracle to destroy him. And Moses, without the least difficulty, saw the holiness and wisdom of God in laying this plan, and the wickedness of that bloody tyrant in executing it, and the righteousness of his destruction.

So again, the whole plan of Christ's crucifixion was laid by the holy ONE of Israel, before the world began; and was so very particularly described in the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, some hundreds of years before it was accomplished; and so plainly foretold by our Saviour before

his death, and compared with the ancient types and prophecies after his resurrection, that the apostles plainly saw, that Jews and Gentiles had done nothing but what God had *before determined* should be done: and yet they could easily see, that this did not in the least lessen their guilt. And so can any body else. For it is plain, that the Jews did not mean to accomplish the glorious scheme, which God had in view, in the death of his Son; but only to gratify their pride, malice, envy, and revenge, in the death of one whom they hated without a cause.

A. But if God is perfectly pleased with his own plan, why is he not perfectly pleased with wicked men for executing of it? (p. 7, 8. Marg.)

B. Thus saith the Lord in *Isai.* x. 5, 6. *O, Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation; and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, to tread them down like the mire of the streets.* This was God's plan, and it was perfectly agreeable to him, and the Assyrians executed it thoroughly in the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, a few years after. (2 Kin. xvii.) But was God pleased with the Assyrians for what they did? No: so far from it, that he devoted them to destruction therefor. (*Isai.* x. 12.) But why? Because they did not *mean* to serve God, but only to gratify their own lusts. *Ver.* 7. *He meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few.*

A. But "it is certainly most for God's glory, that those things should be done, which when done, most advance his glory: for had they been neglected, some things most for his glory would have been neglected." Therefore, all the sin, that ever was or ever will be, "is best" on this scheme; "most for God's glory, and most for the happiness of the creation in general." (p. 26.)

B. As to wicked men, as has been said, they *mean not so, neither doth their heart think so.* They are enemies to God and to his glory, and aim only to gratify their corruptions. But as to God, it is true, as it is written in *Psalm* lxxvi.

10. *the wrath of man shall praise thee; and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.* All the sin that has been, or ever will be, God will turn to his glory. Nor will he ever suffer any one sin to be committed, but what he sees with absolute certainty, is best to permit in this view. And this is so far from reflecting upon God's holiness, that it is the only way to vindicate his conduct. And while you oppose this, you are obliged to say, that "in fact God does not do that which is most for his glory."

A. Can a crime which is "infinitely to God's dishonour, be infinitely to his honour?" (p. 26.)

B. GOD can bring infinite honour to himself out of such crimes, as in their own nature are infinitely dishonourable to him; as you yourself will not deny. (p. 6.)

A. Well, if this be so, the more sin the better. (p. 28, 29.)

B. I hope you have not forgot the doom St. *Paul* gives those who say, *let us do evil, that good may come.* viz. that their *damnation is just.* Rom. iii. 8.

A. But upon your scheme "all sinners do sincerely seek the glory of God in the gratification of their lusts: and so they are all good men, and will be saved." (p. 29.)

B. That is, because God intended to glorify himself by all *Pharaoh's* haughtiness; therefore *Pharaoh* himself, when he bid defiance to the God of the Hebrews, sincerely sought the glory of God; and so was a good man, and is gone to heaven! Do you really believe this! or do you mean to banter on so serious and grave a subject!

A. I believe "your scheme will encourage wickedness: and your libertine young gentlemen will be extremely obliged to you for a scheme so favourable to their indulgences." (p. 28.)

B. No sir, by no means. For it is a prospect of success, that encourages men to action. This encouraged *Joseph's* brethren to sell their brother; they hoped to prevent his advancement: and this encouraged *Pharaoh* to try his strength with the God of the Hebrews: he hoped to conquer at last. Had they in both cases foreknown how things would have issued, they would have had no courage to do as they did. But my scheme is, that all sinners will, sooner or later, be dis-

appointed, as much as they were. And all their wicked schemes and conduct be over-ruled to answer ends as contrary to their intentions: therefore, were my scheme universally believed *with all the heart*, it would put an everlasting end to all the courage of all wicked beings in the whole system. Pray, sir, put it to your own case. Would you be encouraged to write against *the wisdom of God in the permission of sin* once more; if you knew that God would over-rule it, to confirm the doctrine, and bring you to shame in the sight of all the country? that is, Is a certainty of complete disappointment, the great encouragement to action?

A. But if God thinks it for the best that sin should be, why does he forbid it, and take so much pains to hinder it? (p. 27.)

B. Ask *Moses* if God thought it best to suffer *Pharaoh* to refuse to let Israel go, why did God send him so often to say to *Pharaoh*, in the name of the Lord, *let Israel go, that he may serve me?* Or, rather, as your question most immediately reflects upon the holy majesty of heaven and earth, whom you implicitly charge with inconsistent conduct, if you have courage, ask him. Or rather, recall your question, as it is so plain a case, that in the whole of that affair God's conduct was perfectly consistent. For, by the whole, God meant to let it be *known that he was the LORD, and to fill the whole earth with his glory*. Which end was answered, by all the methods he took to make *Pharaoh* sensible of his duty, and by his leaving him, after all, to harden his heart, and act against the clearest light; whereby he was prepared for so remarkable a destruction; in which God *showed his power*, and *caused his name to be declared throughout all the earth*

A. But can you forbid your child to do a thing, and then stand by and permit it to transgress, consistently with yourself? (p. 16.)

B. Parents, and tutors, and masters often do so; that while they catch their children, or pupils, or servants, at their bad tricks, they may be under the better advantages to convict and reform them; and so have one and the same end in forbidding and in permitting: and children of four years old are able to see the consistence of such conduct.

Joseph's brethren were very proud and very envious: this prompted them to sell their brother. God hated their pride and envy. God intended to reform them. God suffered them to exercise and gratify their pride and envy in selling their brother, and then over-ruled this their wickedness, so as greatly to humble them. They *bow to their brother.* Yea, they are *glad to bow to him, and pay him honour.* And all this was, in God, perfectly consistent, and perfectly wise.

A. But "this is making God do evil, that good may come of it." (p. 17.)

B. No, sir, not unless it is "doing evil," for God to act in the wisest and most perfect manner: i. e. not unless you *call good evil, and evil good.* And I leave it to the impartial world, which scheme makes God the author of sin." That which supposes that he always acts according to his infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude, and does what he infallibly knows is most for his glory and the good of the system; or that, which supposes just the contrary, viz. "that in fact God does not do what is most for his own glory." (p. 13.) Pray read *Isai.* v. 20*.

A. But "if obedience had not been, upon the whole, for the best, a perfect being could not have enjoined it." (p. 20.)

B. The very best things we can aim at, are the glory of God, and the good of the system: and the only way we can take, that we may actively promote these ends, is to do as God

* If God has wise, holy, and good ends in the permission of sin, then he is charged with being "the author of sin." And if he has no good end in the permission of sin, then he does what he knows is "not most for his own glory." And this is the case with respect to every sin, that ever was or will be committed, by men or devils. So that, according to this writer, God is the greatest sinner in the universe. For either he is "the author of all sin;" or, which is no better, acts contrary to his best judgment in the permission of every sin that is committed; doing what he knows is "not most for his own glory." Meanwhile the devil is represented as the greatest saint: as one who has done most for the advancement of God's glory, and good of the universe. (p. 17.) The sins of all wicked beings he puts to God's account. He is the "author of all." And the good which God brings out of all, is put to their account. So God must answer for all the sin, and the devil and his adherents have the praise of all the good, in the universe. And all this is to set the scripture doctrine of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin, "in the most horrible and deformed light possible."

has bid us: *Love the Lord with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves.* Therefore God, the most perfect being, may well enjoin this upon us. About all this there is no dispute. The only question is, what is wisest and best *for God to do?* To interpose and prevent sin, in all cases; or else, in some cases, to suffer his creatures to sin? If God can promote the glory of God and good of the system, to better advantage by the permission of sin, than by hindering it, it is best on the whole for him to permit it. As in the case of *Joseph, Pharaoh,* and *Christ's crucifixion,* &c. &c. God could have sent more than twelve legions of angels to rescue Christ out of the hands of his enemies; as is plainly intimated in *Mat.* xxvi. 53, 54. *Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?* This would have disconcerted the infinitely wise plan which God had laid in eternity; of which he had given intimations in the sacred writings of the Old Testament*.

* The reason our Saviour did not desire his Father to interpose and effectually hinder that horrid sin the Jews were now about to commit, is very remarkable, and worthy our attentive consideration. It was not because God did not know they would commit that sin if left to themselves: nor because God could not hinder them: nor because they would cease to be moral agents, if hindered: nor because interpositions are inconsistent with the established laws of nature, and the good of the whole in that respect (according to *Ramsey,* or *Clark,* or *Turnbull,* learned and ingenious writers,) nor because it was not God's original scheme, that Christ should be put to death; but a device of the devil, which God thought himself not concerned to hinder, although he knew his permitting it would not be most to his own glory, (according to the new scheme of our author.) But because it was inconsistent with God's original infinitely wise, holy, and glorious plan, which had subsisted in his own mind from eternity, and which he had revealed in his own word: as his Son from his bosom, who could not be mistaken in this thing, told the Jews. *How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?* It would have disconcerted God's scheme, to have sent *twelve legions of angels,* and hindered the execution of this wicked design. For God had *before determined* it should be accomplished. (*Acts* iv. 27, 28.) Therefore when the time came for its accomplishment, God permitted the Jews to take their own course: i. e. he did not hinder them, as he easily could have done. For he knew it was not best to hinder them: neither most for his glory, nor for the good of the system. And I am persuaded that even our author himself, will not venture to say, "I do doubt whether in *this* God did what was most for his own glory." But if God ever acted wisely in the permission of sin, in any one

A. But "God, at first, made all rational beings perfect in holiness, and perfect in happiness; which, with me, is a satisfactory evidence, that such a state was most for his glory and their happiness." (p. 24.)

B. All the evidences you can have merely from *this fact*, must depend upon the truth of this proposition, viz. that "God always does what is most for his own glory and the good of the creation." And if this proposition is true, it will equally prove both, that it was best God should "create all rational beings perfect in holinesss," as he did at first; and that he should permit some of them to fall, as he did afterwards. I believe the proposition to be true: and I believe both the consequences, which equally follow. You believe the proposition to be true, when you think it will serve your turn: but at another time say, "I do doubt whether God in fact does what is most for his own glory."

As God intended before the foundation of the world to permit sin, for holy and wise ends, it was of the utmost importance, that he should do it under such circumstances, that the whole intellectual system might see and know that he did not do it, as looking upon sin as being good in itself, or as tending to good: yea, under such circumstances, that his permission of it might not, in the eyes of finite intelligences, lessen, but rather infinitely increase the horrors of it. Therefore, he not only created all holy, at first, but also "forbid sin under the severest penalties;" yea, actually executed the infinitely dreadful penalty on the sinning angels, who were the first transgressors, without mercy. And while he exercised mercy towards fallen man, he did it in such a way, as will finally, and on the whole, show his hatred of sin, as much, nay, more, than if he had treated them as he did the fallen angels. But while the whole tenour of his conduct thus joins to set his hatred of sin in a most striking light, his actual permission of it, at the same time equally proves, that he did not think it best, to prevent it by his own immediate

instance, it overthrows this author's scheme, which supposes such a thing absolutely inconsistent with the divine perfections. (p. 8. 17, &c.) And that it makes God the author of sin. (p. 16.) And gives the greatest encouragement to all wickedness. (p. 28, 29.)

interposition. Which demonstrates, that he saw a better way than that to advance his own glory and the good of the system. In what respects his present method is better than that, I have endeavoured to show in my *sermons*. (p. 113. &c.) But while you take for granted, that God could not wisely permit sin, unless he looked upon sin, as *in itself good*; you run yourself into the utmost confusion; and even necessitate yourself to believe, either that God thinks sin a good thing, or that God did not act wisely, "did not do what was most for his own glory," in permitting it. (p. 13. 16, 17.)

A. "Best to stand, and best to fall; best to obey, and best to rebel; sound at least like contradictions." (p. 20.)

B. Many propositions may "sound like contradictions," which are perfectly consistent. For the same thing may be *best*, and *not best*, in different respects. As to the crucifixion of Christ, for instance, it may be said, *it was best to be, and best not to be*. For the death of Christ, considering the good to be brought out of it, was a most glorious event. But the death of Christ, considered as a murder committed by the spiteful Jews, was a very horrid crime. So it was *best* that *Joseph should be sold*, considered as one step towards that advancement, which God designed; but it *was not best*, considered as an effectual means to prevent his advancement, as his brethren intended it. So, it might be *best* that *Adam should fall*, if in the eyes of the OMNISCIENT GOD, the only proper Judge, his fall would give opportunity for infinite wisdom to bring more glory to God and good to the system, than otherwise could be: but it was *not best*, merely as an act of open rebellion against the Maker and Lord of all things; subjecting all this lower world to ruin.

A. But the Holy Scriptures assure us, God is so far from thinking it best that sin should be, that rather it *grieves him to the heart*. Gen. vi. 6. *And it repented the Lord that he made man upon the earth, and it grieved him at the heart*, viz. because they had become so exceeding wicked. Wherefore the Lord destroyed the earth by a flood. (p. 19. 25.)

B. That sin, in itself, is infinitely disagreeable to the divine nature, is granted. That it was nevertheless best, that sin should be, with a view to the good to be brought out of it by

God; and that therefore, God acted agreeably to all his perfections in the permission of it, is still affirmed. Nor do these words, considered with their context, militate against, but rather greatly confirm this truth.

For the true sense of those words is plainly this, *viz.* that the sinful state of mankind before the flood was in itself infinitely disagreeable to God, who is an infinitely holy and benevolent Being; and viewed therefore merely in itself, had the greatest tendency, in fact, to *grieve* and distress the HOLY ONE; and make him sincerely *repent* that ever he made the world. And therefore, were things always to be so, and no good ever to come of it, he never would have made the world; nor would he have continued it in being when made, to grieve his heart, and wear out his life with continual sorrow; infinitely vexed and grieved, crossed and disappointed, in a continued series of wickedness, from the beginning to the end of the world. Therefore, as these words, in the strongest manner, express the infinite holiness and goodness of the divine nature; so they are quite favourable to the present truth. For,

If God does really look upon sin in this light, why did he ever make the world, as he knew how things would issue? Or, why did not he destroy all mankind at the general deluge, as he knew what they were, and how they would prove afterwards? (*their imaginations evil from their youth. Gen.* viii. 21.) and make a new world, and people it with a better race? Which he might have done with infinite ease. The plain and only answer which we can possibly give to these questions, is, that although sin was so infinitely disagreeable to the divine nature, considered in itself; yet, on the whole, he chose the present plan, with a view to the infinitely greater good he knew he could, and would bring out of all this evil. And so all this evil, in the issue, be but like the drops of rain, in which the rainbow is formed, when the sun breaks forth in his strength, (an emblem of the *sun of righteousness,*) and as the blackness of a cloud after a storm, which does but add beauty and brightness to the rain-bow; which the Most High appointed as *a token of his covenant*, and which, perhaps as an *hieroglyphic*, was designed to suggest the true reason of God's continuing

the world in being. Therefore, when *Noah* after the flood offered sacrifice, a type of the great sacrifice of Christ; that *seed of the woman,* which was by heaven's high decree, to *bruise the serpent's head,* and by superior wisdom turn all his mischief to greater good, the only way to crush the head and for ever perfectly subdue that old serpent, which is the devil. I say, therefore, when *Noah,* according to divine institution, offered sacrifice, and brought into view the great Messiah, and all his glorious work, God was well pleased; good will come out of evil. *And the* LORD *smelled a sweet savour;* (in the Hebrew, *a savour of rest.* God's heart was now well pleased,) *and the* LORD *said in his heart,* (as being perfectly pleased with his perfect plan, upon the whole,) *I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* *Gen.* viii. 21. As if he had said, "I know mankind will be as bad as ever. However, I will destroy them no more; but continue *summer and winter, seed-time and harvest,* for the benefit of the human race; because the *seed of the woman will,* in the issue, *bruise the serpent's head,* disappoint his whole scheme, and bring greater good out of all this evil."

But to return to the sense you put on the text. *It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at the heart.* But, dear sir, why repent and be grieved at the heart, that he made man; and yet after all continue this race in being! and so practically prefer the present plan before any other: when, of all possible plans, he still had his choice; and the very best, by one word's speaking, you think, might with infinite ease have been, by him, brought into existence; and so, he be perfectly pleased for ever! Or, when all mankind, but eight, were destroyed by the flood, it had been an easy thing to have destroyed them; and so made thorough work: and to have created another *Adam* and *Eve,* and effectually prevented their fall; and so have had all things perfectly to his mind. To be *grieved* with, and *repent* of his *old plan,* considered on the whole, and yet to go on with it at the same time, when, of all possible plans, he still had his choice, even at the flood, is perfectly inconsistent. Your sense of the words therefore, sir, cannot be right: and unless

you will make the HOLY ONE of Israel inconsistent with himself, you must come into the sense which I have given.

But we have had enough, quite enough, of this kind of objections. I wish you would urge something more directly to the purpose. Pray, prove, if you can, either that God has not in fact permitted sin; or, that he is not an absolutely perfect being: for if both these are true, a thousand objections cannot overthrow the doctrine of the wisdom of God in the permission of sin. Rather, you will be found fighting against God; which, as you own, is an "extremely dangerous" thing.

A. I do not choose to say that, in fact, God has not permitted sin: but this I am bold to say, that there is not "one single scripture-text," which teaches, that God ever permitted sin, in one single instance, with a view to the good that he intended to bring out of it. (p. 3.)

B. Well, this is to the purpose indeed, were it true. But it is strange that a man, with his Bible in his hands, and his eyes in his head, should ever say so. *Ye thought evil against me*, says Joseph to his brethren. "Your design in what was done, was an evil design. But God's design, in what was done, was a good design. *God meant it unto good.*" Which, it is plain, refers not to God's *after-act*, but to his *original intention*. *God meant it*, i. e. God meant I should be sold. He *meant it* as much as you did. Your scheme was to prevent my advancement. But *God meant it unto good*; i. e. "God intended that event should come to pass, to answer the good ends he had in view.' What can be plainer?

But if you want another instance, you may have it in *Pharaoh*. Where the expressions used are much stronger than such as I have been wont to use, (as indeed scripture expressions relative to this subject generally are,) and evidently take in some ideas over and above a mere *permission*, as I have explained that word. For God not only left *Pharaoh* to the hardness of his own heart, but ordered external circumstances so as, considering *Pharaoh's* temper, God knew would infallibly strengthen his obstinacy. Particularly, in suffering the *magicians* to imitate several of the miracles of *Moses*, and from time to time removing the plagues, and so giving opportunity for *Pharaoh* to regain his courage,

and renew his opposition, &c. And God plainly intended by all, that things should be carried to such an extremity as they were, that he might the better answer his own holy, wise, and glorious ends. Yea, God expressly declares, that this was his design. Exod. xiv. 1, 2, 3, 4. *And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-Zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, they are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart that he shall follow after them, and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.*

When God first sent Moses into Egypt to Pharaoh, he told him before-hand, *I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand and smite Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. Exod.* iii. 19, 20. And the whole scheme is opened in *Chap.* x. 1, 2. Where nothing can be plainer than that God had holy and wise ends in view in all he did. *I have*, says the Holy One of Israel, *hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants,* but for what end? *that I might shew these my signs before him:* but to what purpose? *and that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done amongst them.* And all for what? THAT YE MAY KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD —Compared with chap. ix. 16. *And in very deed,* says God himself, *for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.* But as it is of importance to know in what light the holy Scriptures set this subject, pray read and compare Gen. xv. 12—16. and xlv. 5—8. and l. 20. Ex. iii. 18—20. and iv. 21. and vii. 3, 4, 5. 18. and ix. 12. 16. and x. 1, 2. 20. 27. and xi. 9, 10. and xiv. 1, 2, 3, 4. 8. 17, 18. Deut. ii. 30. Josh. xi. 20. 2 Sam. xii. 11, 12. and xvi. 10, 11. 21, 22. 1 Kings xi. 9, 14. 23. 26—39. and xii. 15. and xxii. 19—23. 2 Kings 24. 20. 2 Chr. 10. 15. and xxv. 20. and xxxii. 31. Job i. 6—12. 21, 22. and ii. 1—6. 10. Psal. cv. 17.

25. Is. x. 5—15. Jer. xxv. 9. and xxvii. 1—7. and li. 20—25. Matt. xxvi. 53, 54. Luke xxii. 21, 22. and xxiv. 25—27. John xix. 24. 33—37. Acts ii. 23. and iii. 18. and iv. 24—28. Rom. ix. 18. 22, 23. and xi. 7—11. 1 Cor xi. 19. 2 Thes. ii. 11, 12. Rev. xvii. 17. Pray, read these "scripture-texts," my friend, and then tell me, whether the doctrine of *God's permitting sin for wise, and holy, and good ends,* be *from heaven* or *of men.*

A. As to the affair of *Joseph,* which you so much insist upon, I grant, it was by infinite wisdom over-ruled for good. But, however, it is not at all "to your purpose." (p. 6.)

B. But, sir, perhaps others will think it much to the purpose. For, if God has, in only one instance, permitted sin for wise and holy ends, it is at least possible, that he may have done so in all instances. And if *he always acts like himself,* no doubt this is, in fact, the very case.

Besides, if God did permit sin in the affair of *Joseph,* for wise and good ends, all your *ten objections* in p. 16, 17, 18, 19. are answered all at once; and indeed the substance of your book. Unless you will adopt the very absurdities you pretend to abhor, and maintain for truth, "that God was the author of that sin, and loved it; and that *Joseph's* brethren acted like the greatest saints in that affair; had no cause to mourn for their sin, nor their father to lament his want of success in the education of his children, or to be at all grieved for their wickedness. Yea, that their sin was no sin, but rather a virtue. And if *Jacob* or *Joseph* approved and admired the wisdom of God in that affair, it must argue, that they had very unworthy conceptions of God, to think he could not bring about his good designs without suffering so much evil; and had they been consistent with themselves, they must have turned infidels; or at least have discarded all those texts of Scripture which represent God as *hating sin,* being *grieved* with it, and *angry* because of it." If in fact God did permit *Joseph* to be sold, *meaning it unto good;* if this was *God's scheme,* in such a sense as that *Joseph* might justly say, *GOD sent me hither;* then may you do well to re-consider your own words, with application to yourself; "If the present scheme be *God's,* it would be extremely dangerous opposing it; and

argue the highest vanity, arrogance, and impiety." It is plain fact, that *Joseph* viewed, and considered that whole affair as *God's scheme*, as much as I do, and uses as strong expressions, as I have any where done. Only read *Gen.* xlv. 5—8. and be impartial.

A. But "it is not parallel in one material circumstance. Nay, the case is wholly different, and therefore quite foreign to the purpose. For all concerned in the conduct and consequences of that affair, were in a state of *sin*; and therefore deserved all the chastisements they received. They had all blemishes in their characters, which may easily account for their sufferings." (p. 6, 7.)

B. True, "They *deserved* their sufferings." Nor did God ever inflict pain, no, not the least degree of it, in any one instance, in the whole intellectual system, but in which it was deserved, as much as they deserved their sufferings. To be sure, we in this world "are in a *state of sin*," and deserve our sufferings, and need our chastisements, as much as they did. Nor did God begin to chastise us, until after we had become sinners.

If you should say, "that *Joseph's* brethren deserved to be chastised for their pride and envy; and that therefore God left them to themselves, to fall into that sin, that he might in the issue humble them, and bring them to a better mind:" this would overthrow your whole scheme. For according to this, God did permit sin for wise and holy ends; the very point that I affirm, and the very point that you deny.

Or, if you should say, "however, as they were *sinners*, God might *justly* leave them to sin; but God could not, consistent with *justice*, leave *innocent* beings to sin;" this would suppose, that God was *obliged*, in justice, to keep all innocent beings from falling. And consequently, that God's permitting sin was an act of *injustice*; and consequently, that God is not a just Being.

Or, if you should only say, that "they had *provoked* God to leave them; but innocent beings had not;" it is easy to observe, that according to Scripture-account, God permitted *Joseph* to be sold, not so much in anger at *Joseph* or *Jacob's* family; as out of love to them, for their good. As it is writ-

ten, *God meant it unto good.* God had his own glory and the general good in view, in that affair, just as I suppose he had in suffering our first parents to fall.

Or, if I should grant, "God suffered *Joseph's* brethren to fall into that sin, out of *anger* at them, as was doubtless the case with *Pharaoh,* when God suffered him to pursue Israel into the Red sea:" yet it is plain that, in both cases, he had his own glory and the general good in view. And so both cases are analogous to his conduct relative to the whole system, for substance. And only granting, what none deny, that it was no *injustice* to innocent beings, for God to permit them to fall; there is no "material difference," which at all hurts the "parallel," for the "purpose," for which it is used in my Sermons. For this is my argument, as I just now stated it: "If in some instances God permits sin for wise and holy ends, it is possible he may in all. And if he *always acts like himself,* then, no doubt, in fact, he always *does.*" (See my *Serm.* p. 94, &c.) An argument you have no way to answer, but by giving up the absolute perfection of the divine nature*.

A. But *Joseph* needed humbling, and to have his corruptions mortified: holy beings did not need to be humbled, and had no corruptions to mortify. (p. 7, 8, 9.)

B. Finite intelligences, holy as they originally were, needed to have their holy biasses further confirmed; as is plain from the apostacy of some of them. And they were capable of vast, and almost infinite improvements in knowledge, humility, holiness, and happiness; and the greater advantages for improvement afforded them, the swifter would be their progress; as was observed in the *Sermons* against which you object.

* "Because God educes many happy consequences from moral evil in this state, therefore, he thought best that moral evil should be, &c." (p. 6, 7.) is a *false* principle, this author says, I had laid down. But let the principle be true or false, it is all his own. I never laid it down: nor built any part of my reasoning upon it. My argument is stated above, in brief; and at large in my Sermon, (p. 94, &c.) and is entirely different; and, for aught appears, is absolutely unanswerable, on this side down-right *atheism,* or, which is the same thing, the denial of the existence of an absolutely perfect being. For, if there is such a being, he cannot but "always act like himself." And then the consequence is plain.

A. But I affirm, there might have been as great advantages for all divine improvements, in the intellectual system, if sin and misery had been for ever unknown, as on the present plan. (p. 10, 11.)

B. This, sir, you can never prove. And as the infinitely wise God has chosen the present plan, we ought, in honour to his wisdom, and as we would not give up the moral rectitude of his nature, to believe it to be the best. For, as St. *Augustine* saith, "unless it were good that there should be evil, it would by no means be permitted by the Almighty God, who is able to hinder the commission of that evil, if he would." (*Enchirid. Cap.* 95.)

A. But it is "to limit the Holy One of Israel," to say, that he could not manifest and communicate himself to finite intelligences on any other plan, so well as this. (p. 11. 18, 19.)

B. No, sir; but rather, if infinite wisdom has chosen the best, it is the highest arrogance in us to say there might have been a better. It is to set up our wisdom above God's. And to say that God did not mean to choose the best, is gross blasphemy; as has been fully demonstrated.

A. However, for my part, I cannot see any good end, but what might have been as well, nay, infinitely better answered, if sin and misery had been for ever unknown. (p. 9. 12. 19. 25.)

B. That is, you have lived in God's world, perhaps, these forty years, his works before your eyes, his word in your hands; and while the inhabitants of heaven, in the view of the divine conduct, are constantly crying, *the whole earth is full of his glory;* to you, it is all *as dark as Egypt.* You see no wisdom in God's present plan. Yea, it appears infinitely to God's dishonour, and to the damage of the system. So that you are even tempted to look upon almost the whole of it, as the "scheme of the *devil.*" And when you see how God permits the devil to practise and prosper, you are ready to doubt, whether the Holy One of Israel so much as means to do that which he knows is most for his own glory.

A. But the hypothesis you go upon is entirely false, viz. that it was worth while, that all the misery which is or ever will be in the system, should be merely to give holy beings a

higher relish for their own happiness. Just as if a view of misery, as such, were the chief source of the happiness of heaven; and a view of the vengeance of God and misery of the creature, the most ravishing sight in the universe. A shocking scheme! (p. 9, 10, 11.)

B. Yes, sir, a shocking scheme indeed! but it is one of your own invention. It is none of mine.

I believe that "love is the sum of God's moral perfections;" and in one sense, (an *ill* sense,) there is no such thing as *vengeance* in the divine nature. I believe, that *love* is the very essence of vindictive justice. "*Love* to God, to virtue, to the best good of the system, bearing down, in a wise and righteous manner, the enemies of God, of virtue, and of the system," is the definition I gave of it in my *Sermons*. "An amiable perfection in the deity!" And I believe, that the chief advantages, which will accrue to holy beings from a view of the misery of the damned, will be, as the Scriptures teach, (*Rom.* ix. 22.) to give them the most lively and affecting sense of the glorious perfections of the divine nature; *viz.* boundless power, holiness, and goodness; or in other words, God's infinite hatred of sin, and ability to punish it, and the infinite riches of his grace in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ. For it is a view, not of deformity, but of beauty; not of misery, *as such*, but of the glorious perfections of the divine nature, manifested in the moral government of the world; an absolutely perfect plan, which is the source of the happiness of the heavenly state. And I believe, that it is *love* to God, to virtue, and to the best good of the system, which is the chief source of the exalted joys of the heavenly inhabitants; who, on a view of the just punishment of God's obstinate enemies, cry, *Amen! Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Again they said, Hallelujah. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come.* (*Rev.* xix. 1. 7.) They do not rejoice in their misery *as such*, nor in their misery as giving themselves a higher relish for their own happiness; but they rejoice to see God exalted, his authority vindicated, his law honoured, sin discountenanced, satan and his cause sub-

dued, and the Messiah victorious. And this "tremendous scene, by way of contrast, tends to give the most affecting sense of all the divine perfections, as shining forth in the work of redemption, the most glorious of all God's works. So that, upon the whole, the saved will be under the best advantages for ever to have a fresh remembrance of what they once were, to see what they deserved, where they might have been, what God has done, and to behold all his glorious perfections as shining through all his works of mercy and of justice, in a light infinitely bright, and under circumstances most suited to engage their attention, and affect their hearts, and to give them the highest sense of their dependance on God, and obligations to him. So that they will have the best means to make the swiftest progress in divine knowledge, humility, holiness, and happiness, for ever. But you must be referred to my *Sermons*, where these points are more fully discussed, than my intended brevity will now admit.

A. But, "had we a just sense of the worth of our mercies, could we need any thing to raise it higher?" And was our gratitude equal to the worth of our mercies, could we need any thing to make us more thankful? i. e. if we were perfect, could we be more than perfect? (p. 9, 10.)

B. That perfect intelligences in heaven may and will make *progress* in holiness and happiness for ever, you may see proved at large by Dr. WATTS on *the happiness of separate spirits*. It is too plain a case to admit of dispute. For the *favour* granted to the meanest inhabitant of heaven, being of eternal duration, is of infinite worth. And so he never can have a full sense of its worth; or exercise a degree of gratitude equal to its worth; *i. e.* be as thankful to God for it, as it deserves. No, not if his progress in a grateful disposition, if I may compare things spiritual to things natural, should be eternally as swift as a ray of light from the sun.

A. But it is a reflection upon the intellectual system, to suppose they stood in need of this "tremendous scene" for their instruction, or confirmation*. And a reflection up-

* If a consideration of the dreadful consequences of sin is of no use to confirm *holy* Beings, as this author thinks, (p. 12.) why was *Death* threatened to deter *Adam* from sin? If a mere threatening tends to deter, much more an actual

on "the benevolent father of the universe," to suppose, that he really chose "this awful expedient," when there was no need of it; when all good ends might have been answered as well without it; nay, infinitely better, infinitely more to the honour of God, and the good of the system. (p. 11, 12, 19—24.) "The benevolent Father of the universe wanted neither power nor will, in ways inconceivable to us, to raise his creatures' happiness to the highest possible degrees, without this awful expedient." (p. 11.)

B. If the benevolent Father of the universe wanted neither *power* nor *will*," to lay and prosecute the very wisest plan; then to a demonstration, God's present plan is such; "a most glorious expedient!" And if the all-wise God knew, that of all possible plans this was the best, most adapted to the finite capacities of finite intelligences, and most suitable to answer all the good ends he had in view; then, without any reflection upon the intellectual system or upon himself, he might prefer the present plan to all others, as in fact he has. And you say, "that you cannot pretend to prove, to a demonstration, that the present scheme is not in fact the best." (p. 5.) Wherefore, since God has in fact chosen it before all others, and is so "benevolent, that he cannot want a will," to choose the best; I appeal to you, I appeal to the world, which becomes us, as we would be consistent with ourselves, or regard the honour of "the benevolent Father of the universe;" either to believe it to be best, because it is God's, or

execution. Since satan and his hosts were driven out of heaven, down to an eternal hell, for sin; and *Adam* turned out of Paradise, and all this lower world doomed to death, for the first transgression; there has not been one instance of the apostacy of a holy being in all God's dominions. This author seems to think, that because holy beings love God supremely, therefore they love themselves not at all. Which is contrary to reason, and to scripture. *Gen.* ii. 17. *Heb.* xii. 2. However, he attempts to prove the point, from 1 *John* iv. 18. *Perfect love casteth out fear.* Although it is plain from the context, that the *perfect love* there spoken of, is nothing more than that high degree of love, to which some good men attain in this life. Which, although it delivers them from that *fear* which arises from want of evidence of their good estate; yet by no means tends to set them above being moved to watch and pray, from a sense of the infinitely dreadful consequences of sin. As is plain from *Luke* xxi. 36. *Rom.* viii. 13. 1 *Cor.* ix. 27.

to "doubt whether God has in fact done what is most for his own glory," in this affair! (p. 13.)

A. But "would not the least reflection have assured them, that if God delighted in truth, holiness, and justice, he must hate the contrary? that if he rewarded the loyal, he must punish the disobedient?" (p. 11.)

B. Doubtless the angels that sinned had, before their fall, time for some reflection: but it is not to be supposed, that they sinned in a full and certain assurance of being driven immediately out of heaven into an eternal hell. It is certain our first parents had time for reflection, and did reflect; but their "assurance of God's holiness, truth, and justice," was not sufficient, in the hour of temptation, to make them believe "he would punish the disobedient." For although God had expressly declared, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, yet satan persuaded them to believe they *should be as gods*; and to disobey their Maker, in expectation thereof. These are facts; and facts are stubborn things. How know we, therefore, but that God saw it really necessary for the best good of his eternal kingdom, that he should have opportunity to exemplify all his perfections in his conduct, in the manner he does on the present plan? After the present "grand *drama*" is finished at the day of judgment, a sense of all the divine perfections will be impressed almost infinitely deeper, on the minds of holy beings, than when they first came into existence. Then they believed, that God was true; but now they will see it, and know it. Then they believed, that God hated sin, and would punish it; but now, while satan and all his adherents are for ever tormented in the lake of fire and brimstone, in their presence, before their eyes, it will give them quite a new sense of God's "holiness, justice, and truth;" and an inconceivably greater "assurance that he will punish the disobedient." And if the holiness and happiness of heaven arise from the knowledge of God; the better they know him, the more holy and happy will they be. Besides, God has had opportunity to exemplify his faithfulness as to his promises, as well as his truth in his threatenings; and that in a great variety of instances, since the beginning of the world. And when at last all holy beings shall see all God's

past promises fulfilled to a tittle, it will give them the highest assurance of the fulfilment of what will then remain; viz. of their secure enjoyment of the glories and joys of heaven to all eternity. And they will believe it, and as it were see it, and enjoy it all at once.

A. But "would not the least reflection have given holy beings all that knowledge of the divine perfections, which was "essential" to their holiness and happiness, without this tremendous scene?" (p. 11.)

B. As soon as they began to think they would begin to know God, and love him, and rejoice in him. And the more they thought of him, the more their knowledge, love, and joy, would be increased. But yet there would be an infinite degree of perfection, glory, and beauty, in God still unseen. Their knowledge, love, and joy, although free from sinful defects, were capable of an eternal increase. And the more completely and clearly the divine nature should be exhibited to their view in the divine conduct, the swifter progress would they make. And if the present plan gives God opportunity to make the brightest and fullest manifestations of himself, then it is in this respect, of all possible plans the best. And holy beings will know more of God, and so love him more, and rejoice more in him. But these thoughts are largely dwelt upon in my *sermons*; to which you may be referred. (see page 75—89.)

A. But could not these and all other ends have been answered as well, "in ways inconceivable to us, without this awful expedient?" (p. 11.)

B. Can you conceive (pray, think a little and try!) of any possible way, wherein the divine perfections might have been set in so full, clear, and affecting a light, and so well adapted to engross the whole attention of all holy beings, and fill them with the most exalted thoughts of the divine majesty, as that which God has taken in the work of redemption by the death of his own Son? But you say, there may be "ways inconceivable to us." True; but not inconceivable to God. For all possible ways lay open to his view; and he had his choice: and in fact he has chosen the present plan; but if this had not been the *best expedient*, God would not have

preferred it to all others; because, on your own concession, he is "the benevolent Father of the universe, who wants neither power nor will," to choose and accomplish, of all possible plans, the best. And to call this "an *awful* expedient," as though it were the very worst in nature, which "the benevolent Father of the universe," esteems the best, casts no small reproach on the infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude of the Holy One of Israel. But, dear sir, is it not true, that however we feel, and whatever we say, yet God will in fact abide by his original choice, and prosecute and accomplish his original scheme? And no other plan, *conceivable*, or *inconceivable*, will ever be adopted. Nor will God ever own, however boldly we may push the charge, that he does not do "what is most for his own glory." But rather having endured with all long-suffering the ill treatment of an apostate world, his own Son will at last *come, with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly, of all their hard speeches, which they have spoken against him*, (*Jude* 15.) and all the inhabitants of heaven will cry, *Amen*, HALLELUJAH! (*Rev.* xix 1—6.)

A. All this I had for substance heard before, and I looked upon it "infinitely worse than nothing." Yea, I durst boldly tell the world, that I was "ready to embrace the *Manichean* principles," rather than to come into your opinion. (p. 8.)

B. The *Manicheans* maintained, that there was an *evil principal* or *being*, independent on God, and superior to his control, which loved and promoted evil for its own sake. And consequently, that a great part of the present system is, and eternally will be, *evil*; answer no good end; but be *absolutely evil*. On the contrary, I maintain, that the whole universe is entirely under the government of a Being *infinitely good*. And that, consequently, there is not, nor ever will be, any evil in the universe, but what shall answer good ends, upon the whole. That is to say, *there is no absolute evil in the universe*. Now, which of these two schemes is the best, most agreeable to a holy and truly benevolent mind?

That there is much evil, much sin and misery, in the universe now, and for ever will be, we are both agreed. The grand ques-

tion is, whether, upon the whole, all will be over-ruled for good, or not? For if it will, no doubt God originally intended it should be; and conducted as he did, with that in view.

Now since it is plain fact, that sin and misery do take place in the system; methinks every one, who is a friend to God and to the system, should rejoice with all his heart to hear, that *the seed of the woman will bruise the serpent's head,* bring glory to God, and good to the system, out of all the evil, that ever has taken place, or ever will; (and the more good the better;) and so completely disappoint the devil*.

* What can there be in human nature, to incline one to feel easier in the belief, that God had no good end in view in the permission of sin, and that no good will ever come out of it? I will put it to my own case. I am a sinner; I have acted freely in sinning: God's decrees never influenced me to sin; God's permitting, or not hindering, did not influence me; I acted as I chose; no fault on God's part; all the blame lies on me; if I go on impenitent and die in my sins, I only am to blame; if I am an enemy to God, and to the system, and to all good, I deserve to be cast off by God; and the whole system may, on good grounds, say, *Amen, Hallelujah!* And if my eternal destruction is perfectly right and just, I have in fact no reason to complain. And now, if I do perish, and perish justly, why should I be loath that God should bring glory to himself and good to the system out of my sin and ruin? He did so in the instance of Pharaoh; and to Moses the divine conduct appeared exceedingly glorious. (*Exod.* xv.) And if I deserve eternal destruction, as much as Pharaoh did to be drowned, why should I be loath it should be over-ruled to as much good? Because I am no friend to God or to the system, but the contrary. There can be no other reason. For, if I loved God and the system, I should be glad to have God glorified, and the system instructed by my example, if I must be punished for my crimes; as sometimes a penitent malefactor on the gallows, from benevolence to his fellow-creatures, may sincerely wish the spectators might take warning by him. But to the impenitent sinner, who is an enemy to God, and to the system, and to all good; and who sees not the great evil of sin, nor his desert of damnation, and cares only for himself f things must appear in a very different light. Had Pharaoh, for instance, (whom St. Paul views as a specimen of obstinate sinners in general, Rom. ix.) at the bottom of the Red Sea, heard the Hebrews sing, "the Lord hath triumphed gloriously;" and upon it remembered the word once sent to him, "for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth:" it would have been a comfort to him "infinitely worse than nothing." If he must be drowned, he had infinitely rather it should answer no such end. Yea, nothing could be more opposed to the temper of his heart, or put him to greater pain. To think, that, in the midst of all his haughtiness, he had been in God's hand, as *clay in the hand of the potter.* (Rom ix. 21.;) to see, that all his proud opposition to the Almighty had but exactly accomplished the plan which was in God's mind, in the days of Abraham, three or four hundred years before he was born, (*Gen.* xv. 12—16.) or had *done good* or

Pray, my friend, what think you? When Joseph was in fact sold; that wicked deed actually committed; which of the two would good Jacob have chosen? either that no good should ever be brought out of that evil, or that it should be made the occasion of an hundred, or a thousand, or ten thousand, times more good, in the whole, than to counterbalance the damage done to his family*? Joseph's wicked brethren wished, no good might come of it. But, I dare say, that neither the God that made them, nor the father

evil, (Rom. ix. 11—23.;) to consider, that God's last end was "to show his power, and that his name might be declared throughout all the earth;" (Exod. ix. 16.) and that his elected, his chosen people, the Hebrews, whom he hated, "might tell it to their sons, and to their sons' sons, what God had done, THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW THAT HE WAS THE LORD." (Exod. x. 1, 2.) "This, O Pharaoh, was the wise and glorious end God had in view, in permitting thee to harden thy heart, and run such a great length in wickedness! and in this view the conduct of the God of Israel towards thee will be approved of and adored by all holy beings in the intellectual system for ever." "O horrible!" cries Pharaoh, "this way of accounting for it, appears to me infinitely worse than nothing."

N. B. If I can heartily approve of the divine conduct towards Pharaoh, I can just as well, towards all obstinate sinners. If I cannot approve of the divine conduct towards Pharaoh, my quarrel is not with this or that Calvinistic divine; but with the God of Israel. And whether the fault is in God, or in me, will be known by all the world at the day of judgment; when the righteousness of all God's ways will be [illegible] open before the whole intellectual system. (Rom. iii. 5.) And if such doctrines tend to make me turn infidel, I am, at heart, an infidel already: yea, an enemy to the God that made and governs the world. But to use the words of our author, "we ought to be disposed to acquiesce in the account of this matter which we have from him who cannot err, in the oracles of inspiration." (p. 15.) A way of accounting for the divine conduct, that will afford "libertines" and all obstinate sinners, an "encouragement" to continue in sin, which is "infinitely worse than nothing," as this author himself must be sensible.

* If so much good was brought out of evil, in the affair of Joseph, why may it not be so, as to the system in general? or why should it be thought *unlikely*, when it would be just *like* God to do it? The very unlikeliest thing that could happen, has already happened. *The Son of God has died.* And how *gloriously* that affair will issue, in which the *Creator of the universe* was so infinitely engaged, as to become *incarnate* and *die*, I am of the opinion, never yet entered into the heart of the most exalted angel in heaven fully to conceive. And however the *author of the Attempt*, like the *unbelieving lord* in Samaria. (2 *Kin.* vii. 2.) is ready *now* to ridicule the thought of such great good, (p. 28.) yet if he may be so happy, and God grant that he may, as to be an everlasting partaker of it himself, and join in the *new song* which none can learn but *the redeemed*, (*Rev.* xiv. 3.) I doubt not, he will *then* be of a very different mind.

who begat them, were of that spirit. No. God *meant it unto good:* and Jacob was even ravished with joy, when God's glorious designs began to open to his view.

Indeed, sir, perhaps it may be the opinion of all judicious men, that the *Manichean* scheme, bad as it is, is still preferable to your's. For they supposed, that God *would* have ordered the affairs of the whole universe in the wisest, best, and most perfect manner, if he *could*; but he was so counteracted by the *evil principle*, that he *could not*. So that even *they* believed, that God's *intention* was good. But *you* think God never *designed* to do what he knew was most for his glory; although he could have done it with infinite ease, and had not one motive against it, but all possible motives, of infinite weight, for it. But want of *natural power* is not a defect so ill, by infinite odds, as want of *moral rectitude*.

Yea, my friend, what if it should be thought, that your scheme is little, if any, better than downright atheism? To be sure, if your scheme is true, all religion is overthrown. For if God has suffered infinite evil and mischief to come into his own world, a world absolutely under his government, in which *he doth according to his pleasure*, absolutely without any good end; yea, contrary to his better judgment, and when he could easily have hindered it; he is infinitely far from being an absolutely perfect Being, as has been proved. Nor can any holy, truly benevolent being in the universe, heartily love him, or cordially acquiesce in his government; for it is strictly impossible, that *absolute evil* should be acquiesced in by a good being. For it implies a contradiction. And if all holy beings cease to love God and acquiesce in his government, there is an end to all religion.

A. But, sir, I pray you carefully to mind, that I say it, and insist upon it, that "sin is not God's scheme, but a device of the devil." It is "no part of God's original scheme." (p. 13, 14, 15, 16.)

B. And I pray, sir, what do you mean by this manner of speaking? Do you mean only, "that it was the devil that sinned, and not God? that other wicked beings sin, and not God? and that sinning creatures act freely, and are solely

and wholly to blame?" All this is exactly true; but not at all to your purpose. For the question is not, who is it that has sinned, God, or the creature? About this there is no dispute. The creature, and none but the creature, has sinned. But the question is, why did the infinitely wise and holy Creator and Governor of the world permit the creature to sin, when he could easily have hindered it? To this question, you say nothing; only "that you do not believe that God is obliged to do, or that in fact he actually does, what is most for his own glory." (p. 13.) Which is really to give up the absolute perfection of the divine nature.

Or do you mean, "that it was God's original intention and design, that sin should never happen? and that God did all he could to prevent it? but unawares the devil laid a scheme, and over-matched the Almighty; and by craft or power brought it in, notwithstanding all God could do? And so God's scheme was disconcerted, and he disappointed, and his world in a great measure ruined, in spite of the utmost exertion of his infinite wisdom and almighty power!" Some of your readers, perhaps, may think this your meaning. But it cannot be, if you mean to be consistent with yourself. For according to this, God did *all he could* to secure his own glory. Which is a point you do not believe. (p. 13.)

And yet this must be your meaning; or what you say is not at all to the purpose. For if God knew sin was likely to happen, and *could* have hindered it, and yet in fact did not; the whole question remains entirely unanswered; viz. *Why did God permit sin?*

The truth, perhaps, was, you had no distinct meaning at all, in saying, that "sin is not God's scheme, but a device of the devil."

A. Indeed, sir, I was greatly "embarrased." (p. 31.) Expressly to deny, that God permits sin, I durst not do. To justify his conduct, I could not. Yea, I esteemed you guilty of great vanity and presumption in pretending to do it. It was my opinion, "that no satisfactory account could be given" of the divine conduct in this affair. (p. 15.) For I imagined, that in very deed God had not in this affair done

that which would have been "most for his glory" to have done. (p. 13*.)

B. However, I hope, by this time, you are thoroughly convinced, that whether we can find out the reasons of the divine conduct in this affair, or not, yet it is of the utmost importance, that we firmly believe, that God has acted wisely, and in a manner agreeable to all his glorious perfections. For it is an affair of so great moment, and so infinitely interesting, that if we habitually believe that God acted contrary to his better judgment in it, we must entirely give up the absolute perfection of his nature. And if God is not an absolutely perfect Being, he is not God. We may compliment him with the *name*; but we take away the *thing*. "We christians," (saith *Origen*,) "say, that God can do nothing which is in itself evil, no more than he is able not to be God. For if God do any evil, he is not God. God willeth nothing unbecoming himself. This is inconsistent with his Godship." (See Dr. *Cudworth's Intel. Syst.* p. 874.) Agreeable to holy Scripture, 2 Tim. ii. 13. *He cannot deny himself.* Heb. vi. 18. *It is impossible for God to lie.* And if we give up the absolute perfection of the divine nature; and so ungod the deity; it will become impossible, were our hearts ever so holy, to love, worship, and trust

* This author speaks of "resting in the natural and easy account we have of this affair in the sacred Scriptures. (p. 15.) And of finding satisfaction and repose therein.' Which he supposes "the heart of every good man does." (p. 25.) But, pray, what rest! what repose! what satisfaction! can he, or any man of common sense, "good" or "not good," find in believing, that in this affair God has done "what was in fact not most for his own glory?" Which he thinks is the true state of the case. And when he was so "embarrassed" himself, why should he desire to embarrass others likewise? And after so serious and repeated professions, that he meant to propose his thoughts with the greatest modesty and humility (p. 5. 13, &c.) why did he, instead of a serious answer to the late President *Edwards'* reasonings on this subject, to which I had referred, rather cry out, "boasted Metaphysics?" (p. 25.) "Several professors in the Dutch Universities have sent him their thanks" for that book. And how could the "modest humble temper" of this gentleman prompt him to ridicule, what the learned world so much admire? He had a right to answer it, if he could: But if he could not, to ridicule it will but render himself ridiculous. And it is a pity he should not know it. The candid reader is desired carefully to peruse what Mr. *Edwards* has said on this subject, in his book on *Freedom*, &c. p. 252—267.

in him as God, as an absolutely perfect Being; or rejoice in his universal government, and be sincerely glad that he is at the head of the creation, and can and will do *according to his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth.* Yea, it would be a thing infinitely desirable, that some better being, some absolutely perfect being, might be in his place and take his throne. And so your scheme really justifies a spirit of discontent and rebellion throughout all God's dominions. But this idea of the divine majesty, which is harboured in many a heart in this apostate world, is of the nature of blasphemy, *the abominable thing which God's soul hates,* and ought to be entirely rooted out of our minds.

A. "I think it of much greater importance for us to endeavour to get sin out of the world; than fruitlessly to inquire how it came in." (p. 15.)

B. A great part of the wickedness of this God-hating world consists *in hard thoughts and hard speeches against God.* (*Jude* 15.) Therefore "sin cannot be got out of the world," till men are brought to think well of God, and of all his ways. At least, so far as to put an implicit trust and confidence in him, as an absolutely perfect Being, fit to be at the head of the universe, and to have the management and ordering of all the affairs of the whole sytem in his hands.

It is in vain to pretend to make men holy, without love to God. For it is the first and greatest part of holiness, to love God; and the chief foundation of all religion. (*Mat.* xxii. 37.) And it is impossible men should love God, while they habitually believe that there is *no God:* i. e. no being of absolute perfection at the head of the universe, ordering all things in the wisest and best manner. (*Psalm* xiv. 1, 2.)

A. Sir, I did think my *Attempt* an unanswerable piece. And that I had a good right in the most public manner to call upon you to "retract." (p. 30.) But, "upon the whole, I think myself under the strongest engagements to make the most grateful acknowledgments for so distinguishing a favor as your reply to my remarks." (p. 30.) Indeed the permission of sin has always appeared to me as an unaccountable affair. (p. 15.) I could never see how God could do it, con-

sistent with his own glory or the good of the system, (p. 12, 13. 19—24.) or consistent even with his own perfect happiness; as a being of infinite benevolence, I thought, must have had "greater pleasure," if sin and misery had been for ever unknown in his world. (p. 22.) Therefore, I thought that "sin was not God's scheme, but a device of the devil." (p. 13, 14, 15, 16.) And because it is plain fact, that God has not hindered the devil from doing all this mischief, as he might easily have done, I have been led "to doubt whether God does in fact, and so whether he is obliged," from the absolute perfection of his nature, "to do what is most for his glory." (p. 13.) You see my whole scheme, and you have replied to the whole and every part of it; but if after all, I should feel not satisfied, what shall I do?

B. I will tell you, sir, what to do. And may the Lord give you an *hearing ear*, and an *understanding heart*.

1. Be firmly persuaded, that not the devil, but God, and God alone, is the absolute governor of the world.

Reason teaches, that God never will, and never can, voluntarily give up the government of his own world, into the hands of his greatest and most avowed enemy, the devil. And, if the devil is one of God's creatures, as God himself has taught us in his word, he is so inferior to the God that made him, as to be in his hands as the clay is in the hands of the potter, absolutely at his control; unable by power or policy to bring any thing to pass, but by the permission of the great God; who from heaven hath declared, saying, *My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure*, (Isai. xlvi. 10.) And whose schemes cannot possibly be diconcerted, by the united powers of earth and hell. Nay, the powers of darkness are so entirely at the control of the Almighty, that satan could not touch holy *Job*, or any part of his substance, nor so much as put a lie in the mouth of *Ahab's* lying prophets, without the divine permission. Nor could the affrighted devils so much as enter into the herd of swine, till our Saviour said, *Go*. (1 Kin. xxii. 22. Job i. 12. and xi. 6. Mat viii. 31, 32.) How then could the devil seduce our first parents, and break up God's original plan, and ruin his new-made world; in

spite of the utmost exertion of infinite wisdom and almighty power!

The whole tenour of divine revelation leads us to believe, that the providence of God extends to all things which come to pass. If the devil or wicked men were not under the divine control, we should have reason to *fear* them: but our Saviour assures us, they cannot hurt an hair of our heads, without God's permission; whose providence extends even to the very *sparrows*, a bird so insignificant, that *two of them were sold for a farthing*; and much more to the concerns of men, who are *of more value than many sparrows*; and he enjoins his disciples, in the belief of this, not to *fear* the most cruel persecutors; but to *fear* God only: for, says he, *the very hairs of your heads are all numbered. Mat.* x. 16. 31. And indeed wicked men, (so absolute and universal is the divine government,) are, according to the language of scripture, which is the language of God's heart, in God's hand, as a *rod*, an *ax*, or a *saw*, and as much at his control. *Isai.* x. 5. 15. And therefore, St. *Paul*, viewing things in this light, taught Christians in his day, to consider all their persecutions, as coming from the hand of their heavenly Father, and designed by him as kind loving chastisements, for their benefit: and on this hypothesis, encourages them not to faint, nor be discouraged; but rather to take all well, and improve all to their spiritual good. (*Heb.* x. xi. xii.) And in this light all the people of God, from the very earliest ages, have been wont to view the injuries they received from wicked men, as coming from the hand of God. So *Job*, when the *Sabeans* and *Chaldeans* had robbed him, views them only as instruments used by God to answer holy and wise ends. *The Lord hath given; and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.* (Job i. 21.) So when *Eglon*, king of *Moab*, came against Israel in the time of the judges, it was looked upon that *God had strengthened him* to do it, thereby to chastise them for their crimes. (*Judg.* iii. 10.) So when *Shimei* in a most malicious manner *cursed David*, he saw the hand of God in it, and said, *the Lord hath bidden him.* (2 *Sam.* xvi. 11.) So when *Hadad the Edomite*, and *Rezon the son of Eliadah*, endeavoured to disturb *Solomon's* peaceful

reign, it was believed by good people, that God *stirred them up* to do it, to chastise *Solomon* for his sins. As was also the case with *Jeroboam the son of Nebat,* that wicked "*pretender,*" who afterwards *made Israel to sin.* (1 Kings. xi.) And when *Rehoboam* the son *Solomon,* through the pride of his heart, and the ill advice of his young men, returned a rough answer to his subjects, which issued in the loss of ten tribes, and was followed with a long series of calamities for many generations, it was said, that *the cause was of God, that he might perform his word,* &c. (2 *Chron.* x. 15.) And when *Amaziah* king of *Judah,* through the vanity of his mind, challenged *Joash* the King of *Israel* to battle, which issued in his own overthrow, it was viewed as coming from God. *For it came of God that he might deliver them into the hands of their enemies, because they sought after the gods of Edom.* (2 *Chron.* xxv. 20.) And when *Ahab* was seduced by his false prophets to go up to *Ramath-Gilead* to battle, to the loss of his life, the whole plan is represented as being laid in heaven. (1 *Kings* xxii.) And when that proud tyrant, the king of *Babylon,* the *hammer of the whole earth,* had destroyed Jerusalem, burnt down the holy temple, and laid all their country in ruins, pious people all saw the hand of God in it; and believed, that *at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah.* 2 Kings xxiv. 3. But time would fail, to mention all the instances of this nature recorded in God's holy word. And surely it must be needless, when, as in our present war, we through all *New England,* have in so public a manner joined universally to profess and act upon this very principle; that wicked men are in the hands of God, and can do nothing but by his permission, and are absolutely at his control. For which reason we have had public fasts, and public thanksgivings, relative to the war, as though we firmly believed the universal extent of divine providence.

But if the providence of God extends to the *lesser,* it does much more to the *greater* concerns of the intellectual system, as our Saviour reasons, *Mat.* x. 29, 30, 31. If it extends to the sinful actions of men in this fallen world, which are comparatively but of little consequence; much more to the original introduction of sin into the moral system; which was an af-

fair, strictly speaking, of infinite consequence. If it extends to the sparrows, (one of which was valued at but half a farthing,) so that they could not any of them *fall on the ground* without God's all-seeing eye, and all-ordering hand; much more to the *fall of angels*, and to the *fall of man*, beings of *more value than many sparrows*. If the *very hairs of our heads are all numbered*, much more is God concerned about the spiritual and eternal welfare of the whole intellectual system. So that we may have the greatest assurance, that ever since the creation, not one evil thing has come to pass, but under the eye of the OMNISCIENT; determined, permitted, and overruled by infinite wisdom and perfect rectitude. Do you believe this, my friend? Indeed you must believe it with all your heart, for this is "the scripture-account of the matter." Besides,

2. God is a being of absolute perfection; infinite in wisdom, perfect in rectitude, boundless in goodness, who has an infinite regard to his own honour, and to the good of the system; as reason and revelation teach. And as, from the absolute perfection of the divine nature, it is *impossible for God to lie*; so for the same reason, it is impossible he should counteract any of his perfections. Therefore the whole of his conduct towards the intellectual system, is absolutely perfect. And is no more capable of emendation, than God is of becoming holier and wiser than he now is. For he must necessarily choose the best plan from eternity, and necessarily abide by it to eternity. For,

3. The holy scriptures give us the fullest assurance, that God *is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. (*Heb.* xiii. 8.) *of one mind*. (*Job* xxiii. 13.) *With whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of change*, (*Jam.* i. 17.) and that his *counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure*. (*Isai.* xlvi. 10.) So that he never did, and never can, alter his original plan, or suffer himself to be disappointed. (*Psal.* xxxiii. 10, 11.)

He laid a scheme to bring the Israelites to the land of Canaan, and promised to do the thing: nor could all their wickedness in the wilderness provoke him to give up the design. Yea, he was disposed to prosecute it, just as much as if they

had not sinned: as he informed *Balaam*, to the terror of *Balak*. *God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent: he hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel.* (*Num.* xxiii. 16—21.) He had laid a scheme to continue the Jews his visible people, until the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of the Christian church: nor could all their sins before the Babylonish captivity, nor all their perverseness afterwards, induce him to cast them off, and give up his design. No: *I am the Lord*, says he; *I change not*, I abide by my original plan; *therefore ye sons of Jacob*, infinitely provoking as your conduct is, *are not consumed.* (*Mal.* iii. 6.) *He wrought for his great name's sake*, through the whole affair. (*Ezek* xx.) And his infinite resolution to accomplish his glorious plan, kept him immoveable; and finally carried him through, in spite of all possible provocations, from a most ungrateful perverse people; even as he himself had declared, in *Isai.* ix. 7. when speaking of this very thing, he says, *the* ZEAL *of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.*

And, as nothing could ever induce the unchangeable God to alter any of his plans himself*; so none of his creatures were ever able to disconcert them. Joseph's brethren attempted to do it in one instance, and Pharaoh struggled still much more to do it in another; but in both cases all they did was over-ruled to accomplish the divine designs to the best advantage. God had laid a scheme to bring the Jews out of the Babylonish captivity, to their own land. The thing looked to them almost impossible. They walked in darkness, and saw no light. *Trust in the Lord, and stay yourselves on your God*, said the Almighty, speaking of this very thing: *For my counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure.* (*Isai.* xlvi. 10. and l. 10.) And if the Almighty would not suffer himself to be dis-

* God laid a scheme to bring the *Ninevites* to repentance. He sent *Jonah* to preach, and threaten destruction. The *Ninevites* are brought to repentance, exactly according to his design. So that he did not alter, but exactly accomplish his plan in that case. The same may be said of all other instances of the like kind, recorded in Scripture; which, however, are sometimes, contrary to all reason, used to prove, that the omniscient God may, on new views, alter his purposes; when, in fact, he would not be *omniscient*, were he capable of so much as one *new idea*.

appointed in his *lesser schemes*, which were of *smaller importance*; much less will he suffer himself to be frustrated in his *grand universal plan*, which is of *infinitely greater concern*, and in which his own honour and the eternal welfare of the whole system are infinitely interested.

Besides, if we do but really and firmly believe the absolute omniscience and all-sufficiency of him, who is *King of kings, and Lord of lords*, we cannot but see the reason of the thing; and be still further assured, that he can neither alter any of his plans himself, nor possibly be disappointed by any of his creatures. For, from eternity, all possible plans lay open to his view; he had his choice, he chose the best; and what in all nature can induce him to alter his choice, and perfer one not so good? Upon after-consideration, we often have new thoughts, or view things in a different light, and so alter our schemes for the better. But God has not had one new idea since he has been in existence. From eternity he existed, and from eternity all things were perfectly in his view. It is, therefore, absolutely impossible he should ever see any reaso to change his purposes; and equally impossible, he should change them absolutely without any reason at all. And his infinite wisdom and almighty power, whereby he is absolutely all-sufficient, and able, with the greatest ease, to do *according to his pleasure, in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth*, renders it simply impossible that any of his creatures, by power or policy, should be able to disconcert any of his schemes. And *this* he knows; and this lays a solid foundation for his perfect tranquillity, and complete self-enjoyment. And in the view of *this* he can be perfectly happy, and even without one uneasy thought, at the head of the universe, let the storms here below rise ever so high. *The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.* (*Psal.* xciii. 4.) And *this* renders him a fit object of trust, a secure *refuge* to his people, *though the earth be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea.* (*Ps.* xlvi. 1—7.) But this leads me to add,

4. Be firmly persuaded of the perfect and unchangeable happiness of the Holy One of Israel. Or in other words, be-

lieve with all your heart, that he is, not only in *name*, but in *deed* and in *truth*, *over all*, *God* BLESSED FOR EVER. (Rom. ix. 5.)

I grant, he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; an infinitely holy and good being; infinitely engaged to advance his own honour and the good of his own world. I grant, that sin in its own nature is infinitely to his dishonour, and tends to the utter ruin of the whole universe. I grant also, that to set forth God's infinite abhorrence of sin, and its contrariety to his perfect felicity, and natural tendency really to put him to pain and distress his heart, God is often said, in the language of Scripture, to be *grieved*, to be *vexed*, to be *wearied*, to be *tried*, to be *pressed as a cart full of sheaves*; and could sin finally disappoint God's glorious designs, and frustrate the original scheme he had in view in the creation of the universe, break up the plan on which his heart was so infinitely set; could this be, I grant, that he would be not only *less happy*, (as you inadvertently have intimated, that in fact he now is, in saying, that he would have had "greater pleasure," if things had been otherwise: p. 22.) I say, not only *less happy*, but *really miserable*; and that to an *infinite degree*: even equal to his infinite regard to his own honour, and to the good of the universe. To see himself disappointed, finally and for ever, in what was infinitely dear to him; and that in spite of the utmost exertion of his infinite wisdom and almighty power; and disappointed by his own creatures, the clay in his own hands; headed by the devil, his avowed enemy, (were such an event possible,) would make him *feel* himself not to be almighty and all-sufficient; not to be God; not to be King, supreme and independent; but to lie at the mercy of his creatures; yea, (horrible as the expression is,) to lie at the mercy of the devil, the grand enemy to God and to all good. Which *feeling* must render the misery of such a Being as God is, absolutely complete. For if the devil can break up God's schemes, just when he pleases; God is absolutely at his mercy as to the accomplishment of any of them.

So certain, therefore, as we are, that he is, in fact, *over all God blessed for ever*; just so certain may we be, that *his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.* And the

whole universe shall *know that he is the* LORD, and the whole system *be filled with his glory*.

And the omniscient almighty God, perfectly conscious of all this, enjoys himself, absolutely superior to so much as one uncomfortable idea; and without the least uneasiness, in perfect tranquillity, is possessed of an infinite degree of happiness. Or to express all in one word, he is *over all God blessed for ever. Of whom, and by whom, and to whom, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

And what if we cannot see fully into the reasons of the divine conduct in the permission of sin, shall we think he has acted unwisely? Shall we think he does not mean to do what is best? Shall we give up the absolute perfection of the divine nature? Shall we ungod our Maker? rather than suspect our own judgment! Or shall we give up our belief of the perfect happiness of the infinitely glorious and blessed God, and believe him to be a very miserable being, rather than to think, that he can be pleased with that very plan, which he has in fact chosen, before all possible plans? Or if he is perfectly pleased with his own plan, shall we fly in his face? Charge him with being the author of sin? and represent the devil, as the greatest saint, and God as the greatest sinner? as you seem to have, dear sir, with dreadful boldness, ventured to do. (p. 16, 17*.) Wherefore,

* Were it natural to all mankind, heartily to acquiesce in all the dispensations of divine providence, as being perfectly wise, holy, just, and good, excepting only the permission of sin, it would not seem so likely, at first glance, that the fault was wholly in us in this case. It would be a strange case. And we might be more at a loss to account for it. But it is not at all uncommon or strange for mankind to dislike the divine conduct in other instances, as well as this. Thus, it is a common thing for the crosses and troubles of life to sit heavy on the spirits of mankind. And a general murmuring goes round the world. And thousands think that none meet with so much trouble as themselves; and that they have good reason to be discontented. Yet if they have good reason to be discontented, they are not to blame; but the fault is in God, in whose hand the rod is, and from whom all our afflictions come. O, how hard is it for many a one under great afflictions to bring their hearts sweetly to approve of the divine conduct, and love and bless the God that chastises them! O how difficult to get and maintain that frame of spirit, which holy *Job* expressed in these words, *The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord!* But whence arises all this difficulty? Not from any fault in God, all whose ways are wise, holy, just, and good. It is really best, most for

5. I pray you lay it down for a maxim, that sin is, in its own nature, just exactly the same abominable odious thing,

the honour of God and good of mankind, that this apostate race, who have rebelled against the great King of the universe, turned their backs upon the God that made them, and are idolizing the good things of this world, should be thus chastised, that they may know, that it is an evil and bitter thing to despise the Lord, to forsake the fountain of all good, and be experimentally convinced that all cisterns are broken cisterns; and driven to an absolute necessity to confess their sin, humble themselves, forsake their idols, and return to the only true and living God. But naturally we do not love to have our hearts humbled, weaned from the world, and to have God for the alone portion of our souls. And as we do not like the ends, so we cannot be pleased with the means. Did we like the one, the other might appear full of wisdom and beauty. If all the dispensations of providence were calculated to render us rich, honourable, and happy, in the fulness of all earthly good things, no reproach, no sickness, no losses, no troubles of any kind, that this world might be our heaven and our home, this would suit such ungodly, proud, worldly hearts as ours naturally are; and we could love such a God, and think well of all his ways. But, alas! besides all our present troubles, we are soon to die, leave this world we are so fond of, and to go and appear before our Judge, and receive according to our deeds. This is still more shocking. O how glad would many be, if there was no such thing as death, and no such day as the day of judgment! But above all, nothing is so dreadful as the eternal torments of hell. This shocks thousands and millions, and tempts them to call in question all the divine perfections. Especially, when all this is threatened in God's law, for the first transgression, for the least sin. (Gal. iii. 10.)

Now, if it is as difficult to bring our hearts to be reconciled to all this, as to God's permitting sin; although in all these particulars we must own God's conduct is wise, holy, just, and good, or give up the whole of divine revelation at once; have we not great reason to think that there is something amiss on our own hearts? some general cause which produces all these effects? And if we are indeed natively enemies to God in the temper of our minds, as the Scriptures teach, it is not strange that we should feel a general dislike to all his ways. If we are blind to his glory, and regardless of his honour, and unconcerned about the spiritual good of the system, the best good of God's holy and eternal kingdom; and attached only to our own particular, unholy, and merely carnal interests, it is not strange that we should dislike the divine conduct towards the intellectual system, as much as the Israelites in the wilderness did God's conduct towards them. (Rom. viii. 5—11.) For, although on the whole, greater glory may be brought to God, and greater spiritual good to the system; yet if our hearts naturally are not suited with God's ends, neither will they be with his means: and so his whole plan, instead of appearing perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty, may look as dark and gloomy to us, as did the divine dispensations to Israel of old. On the whole, I think we have infinitely more reason to believe, that the fault is in us, than in God: and that it much better becomes us to suspect our own hearts, than to "doubt whether God does what is most for his own glory." See these sentiments more enlarged upon in my sermons. (p. 43—49. 103.)

and not one whit the better, because God permits it to be, and because he intended, and because he will over-rule it to good. And believe it firmly, and act upon it steadily, that there is not the least imaginable reason to suspect the wisdom of the whole, or of any part of the divine conduct; because we cannot see what good ends he can have in view. The truth of both which observations has been at large illustrated already.

Is it not pride, my brother, unsufferable pride, in us, poor contemptible worms, to get up into the judgment-seat, call Almighty God to our bar, examine his conduct, and then boldly pronounce it bad? And publicly tell the world, that he has not done that "which is most for his own glory?" And all, because we cannot see the reasons of his conduct, although we know at the same time, that our views are so contracted, that we are no proper judges; and that it is impossible we should prove his present plan not to be the best? Yea, to be so engaged to slur our Maker's conduct, as to be vexed with a fellow-worm, who thinks it impossible God should act unwisely, and would therefore speak in behalf of the injured Majesty of heaven, and plead his cause, and endeavour to justify his ways to men? And with indignation to cry out, "You have no right to be so *violently confident*, that the present scheme is most for God's glory and the good of the moral system;" "I can offer reasons sufficient to balance your's, and make the contrary appear higly probable!" (p. 5, 6.) For I think, I can prove "that in fact, God does not do what is most for his own glory:" and it is "a mere fallacy" to pretend that he "is obliged to do it!" (p. 12, 13.)

I Pray you, sir, give up this impious, blasphemous, principle, that "God does not do what is most for his glory." And if you think it condescension, pray condescend, at least so far as to believe that God knows better than you do; and is infinitely more concerned, than you ever was, to do as well as he knows how. You would think it an intolerable reflection, if all your acquaintance should join to give you this character, *viz.* that in your daily conduct, and even in the most important affairs, you do not make conscience of acting according to your best judgment. O, blush, be ashamed, and be confounded, and never open your mouth to justify the im-

pious reflection, you have, in the sight of all the country, cast upon the character of the *Holy One of Israel.* Lest, if you allow yourself, Pharaoh-like, to oppose your Maker, you, in the end, meet the same dreadful fate.

Rather, let us seek divine grace, from the God of all grace, that our hearts may be prepared to approve and love the works and ways of God, that when they shall in the next world more fully open to our view, we may be ready to join the general assembly of heaven, and cry, "AMEN, HALLELUJAH!" O, let us get an heart to love his law, and to love the gospel of his Son, and heartily approve the daily dispensations of his providence; all which, analogous to the whole of his universal plan, are calcutated to exalt God, and humble the creature. And if we can be but heartily reconciled to those parts of the divine government, which are more near to our view; we shall be prepared heartily to approve of those parts, which are more remote; yea, and of the whole. For it is all of a piece.

When a sinner is at first savingly converted, he sees but a very small part of God's universal plan of government; but what he sees, he heartily approves and loves. And so he begins to be habitually prepared to approve and love the whole. He grows up into this divine temper. At the day of judgment this divine temper will be perfect. And so then he will be perfectly prepared to approve, admire, and with all his heart love and delight in God's universal plan; which then will be opened to the view of the intellectual system. But those who, when on earth, had not the least disposition to approve and love any part of God's moral government, rightly understood, but were enemies to God, to his law, and gospel, and common dispensations of his providence towards mankind in this world, will, when the whole of God's universal plan is opened to view, feel no approbation; but rather their enmity against God and all his ways, will break out and rage to perfection to eternal ages.

Wherefore,

6. And lastly, instead of indulging a quarrelling, cavilling, disputatious temper, and spending our precious time in finding fault with God's ways; let us rather spend our leisure hours,

in reading God's holy word, and in fervent prayer for divine instruction.

It had been infinitely wiser for the Israelites in the wilderness to have spent their time in prayer to God, than in murmuring against him. Their corruptions made them so blind that they could not see: and then they laid all the blame upon God. For which God doomed them to wander and fall in the wilderness, and never reach the holy land. And they were *our ensamples;* and these things were *written for our instruction.* O, therefore my brother, let us in this benighted world, how dark soever things appear, not cavil against any of the ways of God; but rather humbly cry to him for divine grace, to enable us to believe, thoroughly to believe, that "supreme wisdom cannot err." And accordingly, "heartily to acquiesce in the dispensations of supreme wisdom; and humbly admire and adore, where we cannot fully comprehend;" in a firm belief that all the affairs of the universe are by him conducted in such an infinitely perfect manner, as that when "full day shall be poured on all the ways and works of God," they will appear in such a light as to bring the greatest glory to God, and good to the system; and so fill all holy beings with "unspeakable joy," and the most exalted thoughts of God. And even be a source of eternal instruction, and means of the swiftest progress in humility, holiness and happiness, in the intellectual system for ever and ever. While all join in eternal praises to the infinitely wise God, *of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

THERON, PAULINUS, AND ASPASIO,

OR,

LETTERS & DIALOGUES

UPON THE NATURE OF

LOVE TO GOD, FAITH IN CHRIST, ASSURANCE

OF A

TITLE TO ETERNAL LIFE

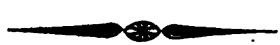
CONTAINING

SOME REMARKS ON THE SENTIMENTS

OF

THE REV. MESSIEURS HERVEY AND MARSHAL,

ON THESE SUBJECTS.



" Amidst all the darkness and uncertainty which evidently run through " the writings of the best of men, this is our unspeakable happiness, that " *we have a more sure Word of Prophecy; to which we do well to take heed.* " As for *offence*, that cannot be given, and ought not to be taken, when all " we advance is strictly conformable to the unerring rule of truth. I have " nothing to do with the persons of men, but with the truths of the Gospel. " Ouranius, though eminently devout, may be mistaken." HERVEY.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IF Paulinus' sentiments, finally embraced by Theron, and exhibited in the following *Letters* and *Dialogues*, are agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, there needs no apology for publishing them, at a time when the contrary errors so much prevail in the British dominions. And it is hoped, candid readers will easily excuse the mentioning by name some authors in the contrary scheme, as they seem to be esteemed the *best* on that side of the question. If his sentiments are wrong, let some man of a clear head and a friendly heart, set him right, from the sacred oracles of truth. And it will be accepted as well by him, as by the public, with the utmost gratitude. For these are points in which our dearest, our spiritual and eternal interest is greatest concerned. And it is even of infinite importance, that we know the *truth* before it is too late.

"Should any thing be urged," says Mr. Hervey, (in the preface to his *Theron and Aspasio,*) "forcible enough to overthrow my arguments, or detect a mistake in my sentiments, the world may depend upon seeing a *free* and *undissembled retraction.* I shall look upon it as a duty, which I owe to my conscience, to my readers, and to my God, publicly to acknowledge the error." And indeed, we who claim to be the *ministers* of Christ, are quite insensible to the honour of God, and to our own eternal interest, as well as the eternal interest of our fellow-creatures; if we are not conscientiously concerned to advance and maintain the *truth,* and nothing but the *truth.* Wherefore, to the above-recited declaration of Mr. Hervey, the publisher of these *Letters* and *Dialogues,* says AMEN, with all his heart.

N. B. As Paulinus had some *other* books in view, besides the *two* chiefly referred to; so Theron has sometimes introduced a text of Scripture, an argument, &c. not contained in either of these books, and for which these two authors are not answerable.

POSTSCRIPT BY ANOTHER HAND.

As it appears by the conclusion of Theron's last letter, that he had not then received the melancholy tidings of his dear friend Aspasio's death, no candid reader will object to him the absurdity of writing letters to the dead. And it will be an abuse upon the publisher of this piece, to suppose it is his intention to detract from the character of such worthy men as Mr. Hervey and Mr. Marshal, or to hinder the perusal of their writings. In these, no doubt, he saw many excellencies; and was not insensible they might give a judicious reader not a little profitable entertainment, by the blessing of God. However, as he apprehended the *truth*, in some important cases, clouded by some unhappy *mistakes*, while he rejoiced in the former, he was willing to bear his testimony against the latter. And whatever honours are due to the *memory of the just*, if the *doctrine of Christ*, their Lord and ours, has suffered, or is liable to suffer in any measure, by means of their mistakes, *that* has an unquestionable claim to *superior* honours, and ought in all things to have the *pre-eminence*.

LETTERS AND DIALOGUES,

&c.

LETTER I.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

New-England, Dec. 15, 1758.

DEAR ASPASIO,

NEWS from your Theron, now in this remote corner of the earth, you will eagerly expect by every ship that sails from these parts. But what shall I write, O my friend! No pleasant walks, no beautiful gardens, no romantic mounts, my dear Aspasio, nor any other theme to entertain and to amuse, must you expect from me! Alas, I have been deceived! My hopes, once high raised, are, I think, entirely gone. As the *rush without mire, and the flag without water: so the hypocrite's hope shall perish**.

As I was walking in my garden, soon after our visit to Philenor†, (which was, as I remember, about the middle of harvest, A. D. 1754,) musing on all your agreeable conversation, your fervent zeal, and how you urged me to believe. To believe what? said I, to myself. To believe that Christ died for ME. How, for ME? thought I. Aspasio knows, I believe that Christ died for sinners. Yes, but he would have me apply that to my own soul; and believe Christ died for me. Aspasio knows, I believe that Christ died; that whosoever, according to the true sense of the gospel, believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. Is this believing in him? Is this justifying, saving faith? To believe I am ONE that he died for; one for whom he intended to pro-

* Job viii. 11. 13. See Mr. Hervey's Dialogues, Vol. iii. p. 313. edit. i.—N. B. The first edition of Mr. Herv. Dial. is referred to in this letter; as Theron is supposed soon after the conversation at Philenor's, to have experienced what follows.

† Mr. Hervey's Dialogues, vol. iii. p. 262.

cure pardon, reconciliation with God, and eternal life? Yes, this, this is faith. "A real persuasion that the blessed Jesus has shed his blood for me, and fulfilled all righteousness in my stead, that through this great atonement and glorious obedience, he has purchased, even for my sinful soul, sanctifying grace, and all spiritual blessings*." To believe it was for ME, just as if I had been mentioned by NAME: even just as my tenant believed me, when, in his last sickness, I sent a message, assuring him I had cancelled the bond, and forgiven his debt†. And just as David believed the kingdom of Israel should be his own, on the express promise of Almighty God‡. And just as I believed my lands to be my own, by the deeds of conveyance§. In a word, Aspasio would have me go to God, and say, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ, and all his spiritual blessings, are mine;" not because I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast, but because I am conscious I am a sinner. All these blessings being consigned over to me as such, in the everlasting gospel; with a clearness unquestionable as the truth, with a certainty inviolable as the oath of God‖. No clogging qualifications insisted on; only believe, and all is mine**. I longed to know that Christ was mine††.

> And could I see my title clear,
> To mansions in the skies,
> I'd bid farewell to every tear,
> And wipe my weeping eyes.

But how can I see! how can I believe! Oh, my unbelieving heart! what shall I do? "Cry to God for help," says my Aspasio. "Seek the blessed spirit, to testify that God has given me eternal life; and this life is in his Son. And to witness with my spirit, that I am a child of God‡‡."

Thus, as I walked, I mused; my heart was full; I stopped, with eyes lift up to heaven, and said, I believe, Lord, help my unbelief. I thought of Calvary. I heard the soundings of his bowels, and of his mercies towards me. *O thou of little faith! wherefore dost thou doubt*§§? Wherefore dost

* Mr. Her. Dial. vol. iii. p. 278. † *Ibid.* p. 279. ‡ p. 309. § p. 312. ‖ p. 280. 313. ** p. 275. †† p. 253, 254. ‡‡ p. 316. §§ p. 276, 277.

thou doubt of my love to thee, for whom I have shed my blood?

I believed, I was ravished; I was full of love, joy, and gratitude: and with eyes again lift up to heaven, I said, "glory be to the Holy Ghost for testifying of Christ in my heart, and appropriating this great salvation to my soul*." And thus I continued rejoicing for several days, and thought I should never doubt again.

But, oh, alas! the scene soon changed. I gradually lost a sense of my great danger, and great deliverance; as the Israelites, who sang God's praise, but soon forgat his works: or like the stony-ground hearers, who heard the word with joy, endured for a while, and fell away. Or rather like the thorny-ground: for, as about this time I removed into New-England, the cares of the world came in upon me, and choaked the word, and I brought forth no fruit: rather, I lost all disposition to pray or praise, and my devotions degenerated into mere formality.

And now unbelief, as I then called it, began to work. "Surely all is mere delusion," thought I. But, again, I said, "This is my infirmity." And those words of Scripture were some comfort to me, *O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt? Who against hope believed in hope. Who walk in darkness and see no light, let them trust in the Lord, and stay themselves on their God. Why art thou cast down, O my soul, hope thou in God*† ? And I watched and prayed, and strove against my unbelieving thoughts‡.

From this time forward, having no clear marks or signs of grace for my comfort, nor any new manifestations of the love of God to my soul, I began, as you had directed in such a case, to *live by faith*. I used every day to go to God, and say, "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." And thus, unconscious of any sanctifying operations in my own breast, I lived wholly by faith: by faith, as I thought, on the promise and oath of the unchangeable JEHOVAH§. And thus I continued many

* Her. Dial. vol. i. p. 156. † p. 289. ‡ p. 308, 309. § p. 313, 314.

months, generally pretty easy; although sometimes troubled with doubts and fears.

But above a year ago, as I was reading my bible, in the 13th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, I found the parable of the sower: which reached my case, and greatly gained the attention of my heart. Here I saw the various sorts of hearers, the different kinds of christians described; and perceived that none are esteemed good men by our blessed Saviour, but those who, like the good ground, *bring forth fruit*. This startled me, this gave my faith a shock I never could get over!

However, not knowing but that I mistook the meaning of that parable, I resolved to search the Scriptures, to see if it were really the character of all true believers, to *bring forth fruit*, i. e. as I understood it, to be holy in heart and life. I began with the Gospel of St. Matthew, and read the New Testament through, and made a collection of many texts of Scripture, which I wrote down and commented upon. I will give you a specimen from my diary.

"*Nov.* 20, 1757. I retired as usual to read the holy Scriptures, by which I am to be judged at the last day. I began to read Christ's sermon on the mount. *Blessed are the poor in spirit; Blessed are they that mourn; Blessed are the meek; the pure of heart*, &c. But, alas, O my soul! I am not conscious of these good qualifications: are there not, nevertheless, blessings laid up for me? I read on to chapter vii. 19, 27. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. By their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* This, this, O my soul, reaches my very case! this is my character! and this my doom! The following verses condemn me too. I am the man that has *built his house upon the sand*." Thus far my diary.

But how discouraging soever all this appeared, yet still I maintained some secret thoughts, that I was only a backslider, and should see things clearer after a while. Besides to give up my hopes, and look upon myself a poor Christless sinner, after I had so long settled down in quiet, was like

death to my spirits. It opened a most frightful prospect before me. If not converted now, most probably I never shall be! I had as good live on in pleasing delusion, as sink down into despair!

And besides, I remembered you had said, "this method of seeking peace and assurance," by signs of grace, "I fear, will embarrass the simple-minded, and cherish rather than suppress the fluctuations of doubt; for let the marks be what you please, they are all a feeble and precarious evidence." And I wished I could boldly say, as once I did, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine; however unconscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast*. But our blessed Saviour's words struck terror through my soul. *He that heareth these words of mine and doth them not, is like a foolish man, that built his house upon the sand.*

About this time I was, by a religious person well acquainted with my case, directed to Mr. Shepherd "on the parable of the ten virgins;" Mr. Edwards "on religious affections," Mr. Bainard's life, and some other books of the same stamp; "which, (said he,) are esteemed by pious people in New-England, as the best of books on experimental religion." I obtained the books, I read them, they condemned not only my present state, but all my notions of religion: and represented true religion to consist in something essentially different, of which I had never had the least experience: which, instead of affording comfort and hope to my dejected mind, did but confirm my former doubts and fears. What now to do, I could not tell; here, three thousand miles from my dear Aspasio, I cannot see his face, nor have his aid. I must find out another spiritual guide; I heard of one Paulinus, a clergyman, a noted friend to vital piety, a tender faithful guide to bewildered souls; but not in my Aspasio's scheme. My conscience said, "Go see the man, and act an honest part; tell him all your case, be willing to know the truth." My heart replied, "I cannot go!" But as a serious, solemn sense of the eternal world was now daily growing in my heart, I was

* Herv. Dial. p. 313.

soon brought to a better mind; particularly in the evening of *December* 8, 1758. As I was alone for secret prayer, I had such a sense of eternity, a boundless eternity, and such a view of the dreadfulness of eternal damnation; the amazement and horror of self-deceived hypocrites, opening their eyes in eternal wo, who once refused to see, while there was hope, but now must see when all hope is for ever gone; that I shuddered, and was ready even to cry out with anguish at the terrifying thought of this being at last my dreadful lot! Whereupon, resolving to be honest at all adventures, I determined on a visit the next Monday evening. I went, I went again and again; and knowing my dear Aspasio would be glad to hear what passed, I wrote down the substance from time to time, which I now send enclosed, in the form of *Three Dialogues;* which, when you have read, I am sure you will pity my case And, O my Aspasio, cease not to pray for

Your disconsolate

THERON.

P. S. I expect no opportunity to write you again till early next spring; when you may look to hear further from your Theron, if on this side eternal burnings. God only knows how that will be. Adieu, my dear Aspasio.

DIALOGUE I.

On Monday evening, (*Decem.* 11,) I had the happiness to find Paulinus at home, alone in his study; he received me with all the politeness of a gentleman, and with all the undissembled goodness of a christian. After inquiring into the state of religion in Great-Britain, when I came from thence; perceiving by what was said, my acquaintance with Aspasio, he made some inquiries after him, and his sentiments of religion, and about a book he has lately so strongly recommended*. Which gave me an opportunity, without letting him into the state of my soul, a thing I was loath to do, to bring upon the board the topics I designed. Wherefore, I began.

Theron. Sir, may I know your sentiments relative to some points in these books?

Paulinus. I am willing you should know my sentiments on any of the doctrines of religion; but should choose to say nothing of the sentiments of any particular author by name.

Ther. I am sensible this is not so desirable, nor should I ask it, but that I am not a little embarrassed between the scheme of religion advanced in president Edwards' Treatise on Religious Affections, and this advanced in these books. And I want to know, what may be said in answer to the particular arguments of these divines. And I shall consider all you say, how plain soever: for I desire you to use the

* Mr Marshal's Gospel-Mystery of Sanctification; "which I shall not, (says Mr. Hervey,) recommend in the style of a critic, or like a reader of taste, but with all the simplicity of the weakest christian; I mean from my own experience. It has been made one of the most useful books to my own soul; I scarce ever fail to receive spiritual consolation and strength from the perusal of it. And was I to be banished into some desolate island, possessed only of *two* books besides my Bible, this should be *one* of the two, and perhaps the first that I would choose." See Mr. Hervey's Dialogues, edit. 3. vol. III. p. 336.

N. B. This 3d edition of Mr. Hervey's Dial. is referred to in what follows; and the 6th edition of Mr. Marshal. *D.* shall stand for Mr. Hervey's Dialogues, vol. III. *M.* shall stand for Mr. Marshal's Gospel-mystery, &c. As both these books contain one complete system, so both shall be considered together.

greatest freedom, not in a personal light, as designed to reflect at all on these authors; but only as designed to give instruction to me. And if you could particularly answer several things I find in them, it would give me much more satisfaction, than to hear your opinion in general. Besides, you know what authors publish to the world, they voluntary submit to the examination of all. And if the good of mankind, which all authors profess to seek, calls for a particular examination of any of their writings, they cannot consistently be displeased, if they are used with candour. These authors themselves have taken the greatest freedom to speak of the sentiments of divines, ancient and modern. And I know my dear Aspasio would be perfectly pleased to hear you, with the utmost freedom, make all your remarks and observations on his piece; for he is one of the most candid, generous, good-natured gentlemen I ever saw: Pray, Sir, therefore make no excuses, nor be at all upon the reserve.

Paul. What particular points, Sir, do you refer to?

Ther. The nature of LOVE TO GOD, of JUSTIFYING FAITH, and of ASSURANCE. To begin with love to God. I desire to know what is the primary and chief motive, which ought to induce me to love God? A view of the ineffable glories of the Deity, as he has manifested himself in his word and in his works? Or a belief of his love to me in particular?

Paul. Before we inquire into the original grounds of love to God, pray tell me, what in God are we to love? and how are we to love him?

Ther. "The Lord is not at all loved with that love that is due to him as Lord of all, if he be not loved with all our heart and spirit, and might. And we are to love every thing in him, his justice, holiness, sovereign authority, all-seeing eye, and all his decrees, commands, judgments, and all his doings*."

Paul. Who are under obligations thus to love God? saints, or sinners? Christians, or heathens? Some, or all of mankind?

Ther. All mankind. Even the heathen, who are without

* M. p. 2.

any written law or supenatural revelation, are obliged by the light of nature to love God with all their hearts; and that under the penalty of God's everlasting wrath*.

Paul. If all mankind, even the heathen world not excepted, are thus under infinite obligations to love God with all their hearts, and to *glorify God as God,* (to use the apostle's expressions, Rom. i. 21.) it must needs be that there is a ground and reason of love to God antecedent to a consideration of his being our reconciled Father and friend in Jesus Christ. For the heathen, millions of them, never heard of Jesus Christ. And there are great multitudes in the Christian world, who live and die without an interest in God's fatherly love in Christ. And yet you say, all these are under such obligations to love God with all their hearts, that they will deserve his eternal wrath for the least neglect. And indeed the holy Scriptures most expressly assert the same thing, Rom. i. 18—21. Gal iii. 10.

Ther. But, Sir, is it not impossible † we should love God before we see that he is our reconciled Father and friend in Jesus Christ? We must know that our sins are forgiven, and be well persuaded that God is reconciled to us, before we can love him‡.

Paul. God never manifests himself as a reconciled God and Father, to any of the children of men, until they are first reconciled to him, and love him. John xiv. 21. Acts iii. 19. Their first love to God, therefore, must of necessity begin on some other foundation, from some other inducement; or they never can begin to love him at all.

* M. p. 4, 5.

† Should a lying fellow bring tidings to an impenitent prisoner justly condemned to die for murder, assuring him of a pardon from his judge; the deluded murderer might be full of love to his judge, and greatly extol his justice, as well as goodness, and pour out floods of tears: but on discerning his mistake, he would soon return to his former temper. God's nature and law are just the same before he forgives us as after; and as worthy to be loved. But it is easier for an impenitent sinner to commend God's law, in a firm belief he is delivered from the curse, than to love it as being in its own nature *holy, just,* and *good.* Satan knows, it is no evidence of uprightness in God's account, that a man is very religious, if all his religion arises merely from selfish considerations. *Job* i. 8, 9, 10, 11.

‡ M. p. 21. 25.

Ther. But what is there in God, that can induce us to love him, unless we first know that he loves us? I appeal to the experience of all the true saints, as inconsistent with your supposition*.

Paul. This is the language of God's law, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.* Pray, what reasons and grounds are there for this law? Answer my question first, and then I will answer your's. Tell me the grounds and reasons of this law, and I will tell you what there is to induce us to love God before we know that he loves us.

Ther. The law teaches us, first to believe that God is our GOD, our reconciled Father and Friend: *Thou shalt love the Lord* THY GOD†.

Paul. God is our GOD, the God of the whole human race, as he is our Creator, our Preserver, our rightful Lord and Sovereign, who has an entire and absolute authority over us: but he is not a reconciled Father and Friend to all the human race. Rather *the whole world lieth in wickedness.* 1 John v. 19. And the greatest part of mankind are under the divine wrath. John iii. 36. And God is *angry with them every day; his soul hates them, and he is whetting his sword for their destruction, if they repent not.* Psalm vii. 11, 12. xi. 5. And yet even while in such a state, you grant, they are under infinite obligations to love God with all their hearts; and that the least defect exposes them to eternal damnation. Nor have you granted any more than St. Paul expressly asserts, Gal. iii. 10. Now, pray tell me, is this a reasonable law?

Ther. I grant this law is holy, just, and good‡.

Paul. But then it will follow, that there are reasons and grounds why God should be thus loved, antecedent to a consideration of his being our reconciled Father and Friend. Reasons and grounds which are sufficient; which really oblige us in point of duty: and therefore ought to influence us in practice. And if we are not influenced by them, we are to blame. Yea, so much to blame, you say, as to deserve God's eternal wrath.

Ther. It is certain, that all the perfection, goodness, and

* M. p. 25. † M. p. 28. ‡ M. p. 4.

excellency of the divine nature, cannot render God an amiable object to us, unless we know that he loves us, and is our reconciled Father and Friend*.

Paul. The first question is not, whether unregenerate sinners, while dead in sin, and enemies to God, do actually love God: but whether they ought not to love him. Whether the perfection, goodness, and excellency of the divine nature is not a proper inducement, which renders it reasonable and fit: yea, which obliges; nay, infinitely obliges them to love God. I think you must grant this; for how else can the law be holy, just, and good?

Ther. If I should grant that the perfection, goodness, and excellency of the divine nature, does render it fit and reasonable that we should love God with all our hearts; yet it is impossible we should love him, except first we know he loves us†.

Paul. If God is really a being infinitely amiable in himself, and if it is fit and reasonable we should love him for the perfection, goodness, and excellency of his nature, then there is, yea, there can be no difficulty in the way of the practice of this duty, but what lies in the badness of our hearts; and so, what we are to blame for. And therefore, were our hearts right, we should love him for his own loveliness‡, and feel disposed to glorify God, AS GOD; as the very heathen ought to do, who never heard of his designs of mercy by Jesus Christ. Nay, all the heathen world are at this day, and ever have been, entirely without excuse, in not being thus affected towards the infinitely glorious God that made them. Yea, they are for this infinitely to blame, so as to deserve eternal wrath. And this is St. Paul's doctrine, Rom. i. 18.

* M. p. 25. † M. p. iv. 25.

‡ If our hearts were right, i. e. were as they ought to be, were as the law requires them to be, we should love God for his own loveliness. But in regeneration our hearts begin to be right; therefore, then, even at that instant, we begin to love God for his own loveliness. For at that very instant when *the vail is taken from our hearts, we all with open face, behold as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.* 2 Cor. iii. 18. Even the law, as a *ministration of death and condemnation, appears glorious.* ver. 7. 9. But every man is to blame, that his heart is not right. *Theron* pleads impossibility. *St. Paul*, however, declares this kind of impossibility to be no excuse. Rom. i. 20, 21.

21. Nay, this doctrine is fundamental to St. Paul's whole scheme of religion. Overthrow this, and you will overthrow his whole scheme; for it is in this view that he pronounces Jew and Gentile, even the whole world, to stand guilty before God, with their mouths stopped, without one excuse to make for themselves, though doomed to eternal destruction for not loving God with all their hearts. And so holy, just, and good, does he esteem this law to be, as that it was needful the Son of God should be set forth to be a propitiation, to declare God's righteousness, that HE MIGHT BE JUST, and not go counter to all good rules of government in pardoning and saving true penitents. Rom. iii. 9. 26.

Ther. The heathen were liable to destruction for their idolatries, and gross immoralities.

Paul. Yes, and also for their not glorifying God AS GOD. *The wrath of God,* says the apostle, *is revealed from heaven against* ALL *ungodliness:* against the least degree of disrespect towards the infinitely glorious Majesty of heaven. The least defect of love towards God, exposes them to eternal destruction. This was the apostle's constant doctrine, and a chief foundation of his whole scheme of principles. Gal. iii. 10. Rom. i. 18. and iii. 20.

Ther. But the Gentiles had not so much as heard of the way of salvation by Christ; and must therefore, if their consciences were awakened, be in fearful expectation of eternal wrath. But surely it must be absolutely impossible we should love God, if we view him, as disposed to punish us in hell for ever. Yea, "if I look on God as contrary to me, as one that hates me and will damn me, my own innate self-love will breed hatred and heart-risings against him in spite of my heart*."

Paul. That is, the divine law is so intolerably cruel, that unless it is entirely set aside as to us, we can never be pacified towards our Maker. We are in arms, in open rebellion, so virulent that we are full of "hatred and heart-risings," in spite of all restraints. And we proclaim in the sight of heaven, our cause is so just, that we can never lay down our

* M. p 140.

arms, fall at the foot of our sovereign and justify his law; nay, we can never have one good thought of him, till first he set aside his law, remove the curse, and grant us heaven upon our demands. Upon this condition we will forgive our lawgiver for what is past, and be at peace for the future. On this footing we will lay down our arms, and be reconciled. Our first work, therefore, is to believe that God doth give Christ and his salvation to us, and is become our reconciled Father and Friend. And this belief is to lay the foundation of all our religion. But, O my dear Theron, such a faith, growing up out of such as unhumbled, unsubdued heart as this, and a religion arising from such a root, is all delusion, if there be any such thing in nature as delusion*.

Besides, tell me, my Theron, do you verily believe, that God's disposition to punish sin, according to his holy law, is a hateful disposition? And do you verily believe, that God is an odious Being on this account? Or do you allow yourself to hate God, for that for which he appears infinitely amiable in the eyes of all the heavenly world? Rev. xix. 1. 6. Or is your heart a carnal, unregenerate heart, under the full power of enmity against God and his law? Rom. viii. 7. It is certain, what you say can never be justified. For if we have given God just cause to hate and punish us, by our wickedness, he is not the less lovely for being disposed to do so, except he is the less lovely for being holy and just; that is, the less lovely for that in which his loveliness in a great measure consists.

You acknowledge the law is *holy, just,* and *good,* even as to the heathen world, who never heard of a Saviour. Therefore, it is not the grace of the gospel that makes the law good. The law is older than the gospel, and was *holy, just,* and *good,* before the gospel had a being. Yea, the law had been for ever good, if Christ had never died. We were not the injured, abused party: Christ did not die to make satisfaction to us, pacify our angry minds, and allay our "ha-

* How righteous is it, in the holy sovereign of the world, to suffer such a proud, self-righteous sinner, so ready to quarrel for a pardon, to be deluded with a false persuasion that he is pardoned! As he takes satan's side against God and his law; so God may justly leave him in satan's power. 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12.

tred and heart risings." The grace of the gospel is not granted to counterbalance the rigour of the law, and to render God's plan of government justifiable; and so to sweeten the embitered minds of God's enemies. God the Father was not a tyrant, nor did his Son die a sacrifice to tyranny, to rescue his injured subjects from the severities of a cruel law. Nay, if the law in all its rigour had not been *holy, just,* and *good,* an tecedent to the gift of Christ; there had been no need God should ever give his Son to die, to answer its demands. It ought to have been repealed on Adam's fall, if too severe for an apostate race; and not honoured by the obedience and death of God's own Son. If this law, as binding on a fallen world, is not in itself, *holy, just,* and *good,* glorious and amiable; the Gospel of Christ is all delusion. For it is impossible the Son of God should die to answer the demands of an unrighteous law. It was wrong he should bear a curse in our stead, which we ourselves did not deserve. Such an appointment would have been inconsistent with all the divine perfections. If we view the law as too severe, we must view the gospel as not of God; if we will be consistent with ourselves*.

* In Mr. Hervey's ninth Dialogue, vol. II. p. 16. edit. 1st. Aspasio having cited the words of the apostle to prove his point, *As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse,* Gal. iii. 10. Theron objects, and Aspasio answers as follows:

"*Theron.* Under the curse! because our attempts to obey, though faithfully exerted, are attended with defects! Is not this unreasonable and shocking? Unreasonable, that the God of justice should establish a law of such consummate perfection, as no child of Adam can, even with his utmost assiduity and care, fulfil! Shocking, that the God of mercy should thunder out so severe a denunciation, on the least inadvertent breach, on every unavoidable failure! This exceeds the relentless rigour of Draco, or the tyrannical impositions of the Egyptian task-masters. Draco is said to have written his laws in blood; yet he never enacted such institutions, as were absolutely too strict and difficult to be observed. And though the Egyptian task-masters insisted upon the full tale of bricks, without allowing the necessary proportion of straw, yet the punishment they inflicted, was incomparably less than everlasting destruction."

"*Aspasio.* Had God Almighty's design in delivering his law to fallen mankind been to propound the means of their justification, your argument would have been valid, and your inference undeniable. But the supreme legislator had a very different, a far more mysterious end." That is, he designed the law to be our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ. As Aspasio goes on to show, p. 18, 19, 20, without once thinking, that if the law, antecedent to a consideration of the

Therefore, you and I must approve the law as holy, just, and good, glorious and amiable, with application to ourselves, before we can, with all our hearts, believe the Gospel to be true. And therefore, not a belief of God's love to us, but a view of the infinite loveliness of the divine nature, must reconcile us to the divine law. Nor does this reasoning attempt to prove an impossibility; but rather it demonstrates the absolute necessity of regeneration, as antecedent to the first act of faith; a doctrine your author does not believe*. And yet a doctrine plainly taught in Scripture. John i. 12, 13.

Ther. Whatever we may do in speculations, when at ease; it is impossible, under a lively sense of the dreadfulness of eternal damnation, that we should, with application to ourselves, approve in our very hearts, the law in all its rigour, as *holy, just,* and *good,* as being really amiable and glorious in itself, till we know we are delivered from its curse.

Paul. If the the law, in all its rigour, is not holy, just, and good, glorious and amiable, before we are delivered from its curse, it is a pity the beloved Son of God was obliged to die to answer its demands. It is a pity that a bad, a hateful law, should be so infinitely honoured in the sight of the whole intelligent system. It is a pity God ever made it; a greater pity he suffered it to stand unrepealed. But the greatest

interposition and death of Christ, was a cruel law, like that which the Egyptian task-masters urged, it ought to have been repealed. It was a dishonour to God to make it, and a greater dishonour still to appoint his Son to answer its demands. Nor is a cruel law fit to be a schoolmaster in God's world, or suited to teach us any thing, but to have hard thoughts of God. And yet Aspasio goes on to say, (p. 21.) "Rather than the divine law should lose its honours, Sodom and Gomorrah were laid in ashes; the ancient world was destroyed with a deluge; the present frame of nature destined to the flames, and all its unholy inhabitants must be doomed to hell. Nay, rather than that the least tittle should pass unaccomplished, its curse has been executed on God's own Son, and all its injunctions have been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ." Very true, but does not all this demonstrate, that the law was not too severe and strict, but perfectly *holy, just,* and *good? A glorious law.* 2 Cor. iii. 7. And that previous to the consideration of the grace of the Gospel. Had the law been in itself bad, the death of Christ could not have made it good. Therefore, it was not "God's design," that the law should be our schoolmaster, that made the law good: but it was in itself *holy, just,* and *good;* and, therefore, it was fit to be our schoolmaster.

* M. p. 135.

pity of all, that he gave his Son, his only begotten and well beloved Son, worshipped by all the hosts above, to die upon the shameful, painful cross, to answer its demands. The Gospel opens a sad and gloomy scene to all the inhabitants of heaven, if the law is not a glorious law. You may, O my Theron, be ravished to think Christ died for you, let the law be good or bad; but you can never acquiesce in the gospel-way of life by the blood of Christ, as honourable to God, till the law first appears glorious in your eyes: but rather, (forgive me, my friend,) I say, you will rather feel the heart of an infidel in your breast. You may be ravished to think Christ died for you; although you conceived of God the Father, as acting the part, (heaven forbid the blasphemy!) I say, as acting the part of a tyrant in the whole affair. But then, who can be so stupid, as to believe the Son of God died a sacrifice to tyranny? "If you are safe, you care not how." Is this your heart? If so, you are quite an infidel. Indeed, this is the heart of every natural man; and it is equally true, that every natural man is under the reigning power of infidelity. *No man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* 1 Cor xii. 3. *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* 1 John v. 1. See also Rom. x. 9. 1 John iv. 15*.

* The external evidences of Christianity may induce men to such a belief of the Gospel, as that they dare not renounce it, though they do not like it; but will not give a heart-satisfying conviction of its truth, so long as it seems to contain a system of doctrines inconsistent with the moral perfections of God. But at first sight, it appears inconsistent with the moral perfections of God, to give his Son to die in our stead, to answer the demands of a law in its own nature too severe. So long, therefore, as the law appears in this light, no man can heartily believe the report of the Gospel. Gal. iii. 10. 13. And this is one reason that all unregenerate men, who in scripture are considered as enemies to God's law, (Rom. viii. 7. 9.) are represented as not believing the Gospel. (1 John v. 1, &c.) And this shows, how our unbelief of the Gospel arises from our enmity against God and his law, (John vii. 17. & viii. 47.) and so is truly criminal. (John iii. 18, 19, 20, 21.) And this accounts for the fearful apprehensions of eternal destruction so common to awakened sinners, who begin to see their state by law, but as yet do not approve the law as *holy, just*, and *good*. It is not strange their fears run so high, when they do not believe the Gospel to be true. And this accounts for the aptness of awakened sinners to catch hold of false hopes, and build on false foundations: as they are blind to the only true way of escape by Jesus Christ.

Wherefore, the awakened sinner, under a lively sense of the dreadfulness of eternal damnation, with particular application to himself, must, (through the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit,) be brought to approve the law, in all its rigour, as *holy, just,* and *good,* as being really amiable and glorious in itself, before he can so much as believe, (in Scripture sense,) the gospel to be true. Till this, every man has the heart of an infidel. Yea, till this, every man is as much of an enemy to the gospel, (rightly understood,) as to the law.

Here, my dear Theron, here lies the great difficulty of embracing Christianity. This sets the world against it. Their hearts hate it, and their wits and pens are in a manner constantly employed to banish it from the face of the earth. All the chief errors in Christendom grow up from a secret hatred of God's holy law. But all their elaborate volumes are confuted with this single sentence: *Christ loved the law in all its rigour, and felt it was* holy, just, *and* good, *or he would never have left his Father's bosom to die upon the cross, to answer its demands.* Antinomians, Neonomians, Arminians, &c. must all give up their various schemes, or, if they will be consistent with themselves, go off into open infidelity. For

And this shows how preposterous it is, to think to persuade sinners to come to Christ and trust in him, before first they approve the law by which they stand condemned. They may be deluded by false suggestions and false joys, but they will never believe the Gospel to be true with all their hearts, till first they approve the law. Regeneration must be before faith. (John i. 12, 13.) As to the unthinking multitude, who believe any thing, they know not why, they may believe the Gospel just as the Mahometans believe their Alcoran, merely because their fathers believed it before them. But no thinking, considerate man, who has a right doctrinal understanding of the Gospel-plan, can ever believe it with all his heart, or cordially acquiesce in this way of life, till by seeing the glory of the God of glory, he approves the law as *holy, just,* and *good,* and so is prepared to see the wisdom of God in the death of his Son. See Mr. Edwards on the Affections, p. 188.199. on the Nature of Faith. See also, Mr. Edwards on the Freedom of the Will; in which all the objections of the Arminians against the divine law, as requiring more of us than we can do, are sapped at the foundation, see p. 159. 177. See also the author's True Religion Delineated, wherein his sentiments relative to the nature of Law and Gospel may be seen more at large, and objections answered. As also in his Sermon on Gal. iii. 24.

the law in all its rigour is right, and glorious too, or the Son of God had never died to answer its demands*.

Ther. But, Sir, is not what some say, agreeable to Scripture, reason, and experience, viz. that as our enmity against God arises from conceiving him to be our enemy, so we can never be reconciled to him, till we first see and are persuaded, that he loves us†.

Paul. With your leave, Sir, I will venture to affirm that this scheme is contrary to Scripture, reason, and the universal ex-

* If Infidels triumph to see professed Christians advance such absurd and inconsistent schemes, they may do well to remember, that the very spirit of enmity to God and his law, which produces these sad effects among professed Christians, hath led them still further, even to give up divine revelation itself.

Perhaps, first, the Arminian spirit wrought in their hearts, and they were, (in their own fancy,) infallibly certain, that it is not just *that God should require more of his creatures than they can do, and then damn them for not doing.* The next step, they denied the *atonement of Christ*, and commenced Socinians; for it appeared absolutely incredible, that the Son of God should die to answer the demands of an unjust law. But, lastly, when on further consideration, they find that the Old and New Testaments both join to teach, that *cursed is every man that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*, (Deut. xxvii. 26. Gal. iii. 10.) and find that it is asserted, that *Christ was made a curse for us, to redeem us from this very curse*, (ver. 13.) *even from the wrath to come*, (1 Thes. i. 10.) and perceive, that the doctrine of atonement is so universally inwrought into the whole of divine revelation, that it cannot possibly be severed from it; and yet consider, that if Christ died to answer the demands of the law, the law must be supposed to be *holy, just*, and *good*, in all its rigour: a point they never can believe. Therefore, to extricate themselves out of all difficulties at once, (bold, daring rebels to God that they be!) notwithstanding all the infallible evidences God has given to its truth, they run the dreadful venture to give up the Bible itself. They had rather turn professed infidels, than own the divine law to be *holy, just*, and *good*. And, then, so inconsistent are they, they pretend to make the *law of nature* their only rule. Not considering that their enmity to the *law of nature*, the true and real *law of nature*, hath driven them to this dreadful length.

The fool saith in his heart, there is no God. Did mankind really believe that there is a God of infinite glory, they could not but be convinced that they are really under infinite obligations to love him as such with all their hearts; and that the least defect deserves his everlasting wrath. But a fallen world are dead to God, blind to his beauty, and enemies to his law; as all their reasonings, and all their conduct join to prove. So that atheism is the root of all errors; and enmity to God and his law shuts our eyes against the truth, and gives infidelity a reigning power over our hearts.

† M. p. 25, 26, 27. 140.

perience of all true saints. As to the experience of all true saints, we have that in the plainest language, described by an inspired writer, 2. Cor. iii. 18. *We* ALL *with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.* A sight of the glory of God is what moves us to love him. Love to God is that image of God we are changed into. The image of God chiefly consists in love, as all own. And this is produced by a sense of God's glory, as the inspired apostle affirms. Besides, this scheme is contrary to the whole tenour of Scripture, which every where teaches, that those who are enemies to God, are actually in a state of *condemnation,* (John iii. 18.) *and of wrath,* (ver. 36.) and never can, nor will be received into the divine favour, till they *repent* and are *converted,* (Acts iii. 19.) *till they turn to God,* (Prov. i. 23, 24. Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) and are *reconciled to him through Jesus Christ.* (2 Cor. v. 20. Luke xiii. 3. 5.) And indeed a true justifying faith comprises all this in its very nature, in its very first act. Besides, if one should be so deluded, as to believe God was reconciled to him while impenitent, and out of Christ, this belief would not, could not bring him to love God. 'It is true such an one might, like the carnal Israelites at the side of the Red sea, be full of joy and love, arising merely from self-love. A kind of love which has in it nothing of the nature of true love to God; but is consistent with a reigning enmity against him.

Ther. But if our enmity against God arises from conceiving him to be our enemy, remove the cause, and the effect will cease. If we view him as our reconciled Father and friend, the occasion of our enmity being removed, our enmity will cease, and we shall naturally love him.

Paul. Right, Theron, you say true, if that be the only cause of our enmity, this will effectually remove it. Nor shall we need to be *born again,* (John iii. 3.) or to have any new principle of *divine life* communicated to us. (John iii. 6. Eph. ii. 5.) But from the principles of nature we may love God thus, (Mat. v. 46.) and the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit will be wholly needless. The vail need not be taken from our hearts, that we may behold the glory of God, (2 Cor. iii. 18.) Only let God declare that he

the way of heretics, who thus *wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction.* (2 Pet. iii. 16.) We are rather, by viewing the context, and comparing Scripture with Scripture, to search for the true meaning of the inspired writer. My dear Aspasio has set those words of St. James in their proper light, and proved that they are not at all to the purpose of the Arminians. (Vol. I. p. 268.) And indeed, I wonder how men that ever saw their own righteousness to be as filthy rags, should ever think of perverting the apostle's words to a meaning, it is plain, he never intended.

Paul. You speak well, my dear Theron, and I wonder how men, who are daily "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord," should ever think of putting such a sense on those words of St. John. A sense, it is plain, he never intended, neither came it into his heart. Indeed, I hope some men's hearts are more orthodox than their heads. However, let that be as it will; for it does not belong to you nor me to judge the state of men's souls: God only knows their hearts. With God we leave them. Yet their notions of religion we may examine, compare with Scripture, and pass judgment upon. Here we have a good right to judge. Wherefore, let us, observing the rules of interpreting Scripture, which you have hinted, rules which all parties must allow to be good: let us, I say, impartially examine those words of the apostle, in 1 John iv. 16. 19. which you just now referred to, as clearly expressing your whole scheme. Here, my dear Theron, here is the Bible; take it, and read the Epistle through; and when you have done, tell me: who are they, what is the character of the men who use this confident language! "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." Were they saints or sinners? Did they know they were the children of God, or were they doubtful? Did they know they were in a good estate by being conscious of sanctifying operations in their own breasts?

Ther. I have read the epistle; I grant they knew they were the children of God, and heirs of eternal glory. They did not merely hope this was the case; but they were certain of it.

They KNEW it. (chap. iii. 1, 2.) And they knew it by such evidences as these, because they knew God, loved him, and kept his commands, (chap. ii. 3, 4, 5.) imitated the example of Christ, (ver. 6.) loved the brethren, (ver. 10.) as bearing the image of God, (chap. v. 1.) had overcome the prince of darkness, (chap. ii. ver. 13.) were weaned from the world, (ver. 15.) had such divine illuminations, as enabled them to understand, and confirmed them in the belief of the great doctrines of religion, so that it was impossible they should be seduced, (ver. 19. 27.) purified themselves after the pattern of Christ, (chap. iii. 3.) lived in no sin, (ver. 6.) yea, could not live in sin, (ver. 9.) made sanctification their criterion of a good estate, (ver. 10.) looked upon all that were without it as children of the devil, (ver. 10.) they were governed by divine grace in their conduct towards their brethren, (ver. 18, 19.) and made it their business to do the things which were pleasing in the sight of God. (ver. 22.) In a word, they were conscious to the sanctifying operations of God's Spirit, which dwelt in them, (ver. 24.) *&c. &c.*

Paul. Now tell me, O my Theron, might not these men, on good grounds, and with a safe warrant, say, we have known and believed the love that God hath to us? They knew they were the children of God, and entitled to eternal glory. They knew they were of the number of the elect, the sheep for whom Christ died with an absolute design to save. They knew all this, not by believing it without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason; but they knew all this by evidences which pass for infallible in the court of heaven. Evidences which they knew, and we know, the Judge will pronounce to be good and valid at the great day. Now tell me, O my Theron, if these men knew that God loved them, how can that prove, that Christless, impenitent sinners, enemies to God, unreconciled, can know it too? These men had good evidence for what they believed; but Christless sinners have no evidence that God loves them, or designs to save them, "from Scripture, sense, or reason," as the celebrated Mr. Marshal is obliged to own*.

* M. p. 173.

Ther. But the apostle says, we love him because he first loved us. Which plainly supposes, they knew God loved them before they loved him.

Paul. If the apostle, and all those apostolic saints, should join to declare they never understood the matter so, this would quite satisfy you. But which is altogether equivalent, they all agreed to make this their steady maxim, *He that committeth sin is of the devil.* (Ch. iii. 8, 9, 10.) But antecedent to the first act of grace, they had only committed sin. Every act was a sinful act, before the first gracious and holy act. And therefore, according to their own rule, they were not the children of God, but the children of the devil; till they had performed, at least, one act of grace. And until they knew they had performed an act of grace according to their own rule, they could not know their state was changed for the better. But in the first act of saving grace, the sinner's heart is really reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. So that we begin to love God before we know that he begins to love us; *repent and be converted,* not because your sins are already, but that they *may be blotted out,* (Acts iii. 19.)

Ther. This is not agreeable to my experience. 1st. I had the love of God, as a reconciled God, manifested to my soul. 2d. Hereupon I believed that God was my reconciled God and Father. 3d. And so I loved God because he first loved me. And indeed it is plain the apostle taught, that God loves us before we love him. 1 John iv. 10. *Not that we loved God, but that he loved us.* He loved us before we loved him.

Paul. But think a little, O my Theron! You do not maintain that a sinner is actually entitled to the love of God, as his reconciled God and Father, before he believes in Christ. This is beyond all dispute inconsistent with the whole tenour of the gospel. For unbelievers are *condemned* and under the *wrath of God.* (John iii. 18. 36.) *We are justified by faith, and not before faith.* (Rom. v. 1.)

Ther. As to faith and justification, I choose to defer these subjects to another time. But pray tell me, how do you understand these words?

Paul. As to the love of God towards us: There is, 1st, Electing love, whereby God *chose us in Christ to salvation before the foundation of the world.* (Eph. i. 4) 2d. Redeeming love towards the elect, spoken of in 1 John iv. 9, 10. *He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* 3d. There is the sovereign grace and love of God, which is exercised in awakening, convincing, and converting elect sinners. Eph. ii. 4, 5. *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace are ye saved.* 4th. There is the love of God, as a reconciled Father, towards those that are converted and become his children, through Jesus Christ. John xiv. 21. *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: And he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.* Ver. 23. *My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* Rom. viii. 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.* Now the love of God, as a reconciled Father, none enjoy but those who are already the children of God; and they enjoy it, as our blessed Saviour teaches, in consequence of their loving him and keeping his commands. And such was the state of the saints the apostle John is speaking of. They knew that they were the children of God, and that they should be saved. And they lived daily in a sense of God's love, as their reconciled Father; for they loved God and kept his commands.

"But how came we to be in this blessed and happy state?" Might they say, "once we were dead in sin, and enemies to God. Now with open face we behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and love him, and rejoice in his love. Once we were under condemnation and wrath. Now children of God, and heirs of eternal glory. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! And whence is all this? Not from any goodness in us, but of God's mere sovereign grace. He loved us before we loved him; yea, before the foundation of the world. And we now love him because he first loved us,

Yea, we never should have loved him, had not he first loved us, and redeemed us by the blood of his Son, and quickened us when dead in sin by his Holy Spirit, and opened our eyes to behold his glory and beauty. Wherefore, seeing God is so infinite in his love and goodness towards us, let us imitate him, and love one another."

Pray, my dear Theron, take your bible once more, and read from the 7th to the 21st verse, in the 4th chap. of the 1st Epistle of John. Read the whole paragraph critically, and you may easily see, that this is the sum of the apostle's reasonings. "*Beloved, let us love one another.* This is the duty I urge you to; and this is the argument I use—*God is love.* And if we are born of God, if we are made partakers of his nature, we shall love our brother. If we do not love our brother, our pretences to regeneration are a lie. If we do love our brother, we are born of God; for *God is love*—(see ver. 7, 8. 11, 12, 13. 16. 20, 21.) That *God is love,* is plain from the work of our redemption by Christ. That the benevolence, love, and goodness of the divine nature is self-moving, is plain, because there was no goodness in us to move him to give his Son to die for us. For we did not love God. We were enemies. God first loved us. Yea, if God had not pitied us in our lost state, and redeemed us, and brought us to know him, we should never have loved him. We love him now, but we never should have done so, had not he first loved, redeemed, and converted us. Wherefore, full of gratitude, we love him because he first loved us. And as the goodness of the divine nature is thus self-moving, and as God's heart is so full of benevolence and love, and as we partake of the very same nature by our new birth; so we should exercise it constantly in loving our brethren. The goodness of the divine nature, as manifest in our redemption, which is continually before our eyes, and its beauty which constantly affects our hearts, should change us into the same image, and make us full of love to our brethren." (Ver. 7. 21.)

Ther. If, by the beauty of the divine nature, you only mean, that God appears lovely, merely because he loves us, I can understand you; and can love God on this account. But when you speak of loving God for himself, I know not

what you mean, nor how it is possible for any to love God on this foot.

Paul. There is an essential difference between being charmed with the beauty of the divine goodness, and being ravished merely to think that God loves me. The one will infallibly change us into the divine image, agreeable to Mat. v. 44, 45. 48.; the other will never raise us higher than to the publican's standard, ver. 46, 47.

Besides, my dear Theron, tell me; do you verily believe, that it is more to God's honour to be your particular friend, than it is to be by NATURE GOD? Does his friendship to you make him shine brighter than all the infinite GLORIES OF HIS ETERNAL GODHEAD? And is he more worthy to be loved and worshipped because he loves you than for his own REAL DIVINITY? Or, as the Papists canonize saints for their extraordinary attachment to the Roman Church, and then pay them religious worship; so do you deify God for being your particular friend, and give him divine worship merely on this account; but for which you would be full of "hatred and heart-risings against him?" We used to think divine love and worship ought by no means to be paid to a mere creature, how kind soever to us. But if you leave DIVINITY, if you leave the GLORY OF THE DIVINE MAJESTY as he is in himself, out of the account; and love and worship him merely for his love to you, and make him your GOD, merely for that; and so pay him divine worship not because he is by NATURE GOD, but because he is your particular friend; how will you free yourself from the guilt of idolatry? To be sure, you are so far from paying a proper regard to real divinity, that you show yourself quite blind to his beauty and glory, and stupid to that which charms all the heavenly world. And in their eyes, you must appear in a very selfish, impious, contemptible light, in your highest raptures.

Had Nicaulis, the queen of Sheba, on her return from king Solomon's court, in all her conversation, dwelt only on the royal bounty which he gave her, (1 Kings x. 13.) and expressed her love to him on this account alone, wondering how any man of sense could talk of the fine and charming accomplishments of the king, and what they meant by loving him

primarily and chiefly on the foot of his own personal merit: would not those gentlemen who had been her attendants in her tour to Jerusalem, have been tempted to look upon her as a person of no taste, that the fine and charming accomplishments of even Solomon, in all his glory, could not touch her heart? And I dare say her name would not have been mentioned in the Jewish history, unless with infamy. But what was Solomon's glory, compared with the glory of the King of the whole universe!

What would the queen of Israel have thought, had the daughters of Jerusalem said unto her, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women?" Would she not soon have replied, with the fervour of an ardent lover, *My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand; yea, he is altogether lovely?* Cant. v. 9, 10. 16. And have not the regenerate infinitely more reason to adopt this language? For as natural men have by nature a taste to the beauties of the natural world; so spiritual men have by grace a taste to the beauties of the moral world. As king Solomon appeared exceeding glorious to the queen of Sheba; so the Lord Jehovah, who sits on a *throne high and lifted up, as the thrice holy Monarch of the universe,* appears exceeding glorious, not only to angels in heaven, but to saints on earth. (Isai. vi. 3. 2 Cor. iii. 18.) And they are all ready, in the language of the queen of Sheba, to say, *Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee.* (1 Kings x. 8.) The infinite amiableness of God, as he is in himself, is the chief source of the refined joys of the heavenly world. To behold such a God, to love and be beloved by him, is the heaven of heaven itself. And the more exalted his glory and beauty, the sweeter their love and joy. His being *what he is in himself,* so infinitely desirable, renders it so infinitely happifying to them, to enjoy him for ever as their own. Psal. lxxiii. 25.

Ther. Perhaps there may be more in what you plead for, than I have been wont to think. And as I design fully to consider these things, that I may be under the best advantages to make up a right judgment, pray point out some of the chief differences between these two kinds of love to God.

Paul. 1st. If I love God for himself, God, even God himself, is the object beloved: and the act by me performed, is properly an act of love to God. If I love God merely because he loves me, I am the object really beloved: and the act is properly an act of self-love. 2d. The one supposes the glory and amiableness of the divine nature is really seen; the other may be where the heart is wholly blind to this kind of beauty, as it does not arise from a sense of God's amiableness, but altogether from selfish considerations. 3d. If God is loved for himself, the whole of God's law and government will also be loved, as in themselves *beautiful, holy, just,* and *good,* a transcript and image of God's nature. If God is loved merely because he loves me, I shall be reconciled to God's law and government, only as considering myself safe from the stroke of divine justice. And I shall be reconciled to God's decrees only as considering them in my favour. Not really caring what becomes of the rest of my fellow-men, I shall pretend to like God's plan of government as being safe myself, but for which, I should, as your author expresses it, be full of "hatred and heart-risings in spite of my heart *. If God is loved for himself, every thing which bears his image, will, for the same reason, be loved, as being in itself lovely, as resembling the standard of true beauty: but otherwise, all my love towards all other things of a religious nature, will be merely selfish.

For instance, I shall love the children of God merely on selfish accounts; as, because they love me, belong to my party, &c. So the hypocritical Galatians once loved St. Paul, as they thought he had been the means of their conversion; but when he was afterwards obliged to tell them some truths which they disrelished, their love grew cold; yea, they rather inclined to join with the false teachers, his avowed enemies, who were constantly endeavouring to undermine that scheme of religion which was dearer to him than his life. This proved they never really loved Paul himself; who still continued the same he was before. So the Israelites seemed to love God much at the side of the Red sea, while they thought he loved

* M. p. 24, 25. 140.

them; but the waters of Marah soon brought them to different feelings. 4. If God is loved for himself, it will be natural to imitate him, and delight to please him. For we always love to imitate and please those who are really dear to us, and their *commands are not grievous.* (1 John v. 3.) But you know the character of the men, *who sang God's praise,* but *soon forgat his works.* (Psal. cvi. 12, 13.) And *forty years long was he grieved with this generation.* (Psal. xcv. 10.) They were much engaged to have themselves pleased; but cared not what became of God's honour when they were crossed. 5th. If God is loved for himself, then the enjoyment of God will be our highest happiness. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.* (Psal. lxxiii. 25.) Whereas, if we love God only in a firm persuasion of his love to us, as himself cannot be our portion, so we shall naturally seek rest elsewhere. For nothing can be a portion to our souls, which is not loved for itself. The man that marries merely for money, cannot expect to find that delight and satisfaction in his companion, which he might in a person agreeable to his taste. And no wonder he absents himself from her company, and contrives excuses to justify himself. Wherefore, 6th, If God is loved for himself, as there is thereby a foundation laid for a conformity to him in the temper of our minds, and a life of communion with him; so hereby it may be discovered, that we, thus bearing his image, are really his children. And so an assurance of our good estate may be obtained from our sanctification; which on the other scheme never can, if we will be honest to our own souls. As well may the rush grow without mire, and the flag without water; yea, as well may you build a cathedral on the stalk of a tulip, says your Aspasio*, as one in your scheme maintain assurance from a consciousness of his own sanctification.

Here, my dear Aspasio, the conversation stopped. I sat silent, all my thoughts turned inward. "O my soul," said I to myself, "this is my very case. My sanctification has for a long time, been no more to be seen than the stars at noon. I

* D. p. 360. 362.

have found by sad experience, no assurance could possibly be obtained this way. To seek assurance by marks and signs of grace, only cherishes my doubts, and increases my perplexity. And what if this is indeed the very reason, that really I never had any true grace?" I was shocked, my heart recoiled. "O dreadful! an heir of hell! after all my high raised hopes!"

Thus I sat silent several minutes, quite lost in self-reflection, till Paulinus began again to speak. "I must dismiss these subjects at present," said I, "and retire. Your thoughts on the remaining points, I hope to hear at a more convenient season." Paulinus replied, "When you please, Sir, I am at your service." "To-morrow evening I will wait upon you," said I. After he had expressed many kind wishes for my good, and I had asked his prayers, I retired to my closet. And, O my Aspasio, you may easily guess how I spent the night. For *the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*"

DIALOGUE II.

Tuesday Evening, December 12, 1758.

I RETURNED at the appointed time. And after some agreeable conversation on general subjects, I introduced the SECOND QUESTION. But Paulinus insisted I should tell my opinion first, which I did, in the very words of the best writers I had seen. Thus we begun.

Paul. Pray, tell me exactly, what *justifying faith* is, in your opinion?

Ther. "It is a real persuasion in my heart, that Jesus Christ is mine, and that I shall have life and salvation by him; that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for me. Faith is an hearty assurance, that our sins are freely forgiven us in Christ. Justifying faith hath for the special object of it, forgiveness of sins. A man doth not believe that his sins are forgiven him already, before the act of believing; but that he shall have forgiveness of sins. In the very act of justification, he believes his sins are forgiven him; and so receives forgiveness*. Faith is a real persuasion that the blessed Jesus hath shed his blood for me, fulfilled all righteousness in my stead; that through his great atonement and glorious obedience, he has purchased, even for my sinful soul, reconciliation with God, sanctifying grace, and all spiritual blessings." And the language of faith is

* Marrow of Modern Divinity, with Notes. p. 158. 273.

N. B. Wendelinus is the author of the last mentioned definition of faith, who is one of the authorities Mr. Hervey refers to. (D. p. 315.) And as this definition seems to have been made with care, and to be very exact, so it is worthy of particular attention. My sins are not forgiven, but I believe they are forgiven, and so receive forgiveness; i. e. I knew it was not true, but I believed it to be true, and so it became true. Which exactly answers to the account Mr. Marshal gives of faith. Of which more presently.

this: "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine. God has freely loved me; Christ has graciously died for me; and the Holy Ghost will assuredly sanctify me in the belief, the appropriating belief, of these precious truths." This appropriating and taking home to myself the blessings of the gospel, is of the essence of faith[a]. "It is not a persuasion, that we have already received Christ and his salvation, or that we have been already brought into a state of grace. But only that God is pleased graciously to give Christ and his salvation unto us, to bring us into a state of grace[b]. To sum up all in a word: Faith is a persuasion, that I am one for whom Christ died, with a design to save; that God is reconciled to me, loves me, and will save me. And all this is believed by the direct act of faith, antecedent to any reflection[c].

Paul. O my Theron, be you not mistaken? Is not faith usually called *coming to Christ, receiving Christ, trusting in Christ, believing in Christ, flying to Christ?* &c.

Ther. It is. But this is an after-act, and is built upon the former. *First*, I believe that pardon, grace, Christ, and all his spiritual blessings are mine: and then I trust I shall assuredly be saved by Christ.—*First*, I believe that Christ died for me in particular, and that God is my God; and this encourages me to come to Christ and trust in him. If I did not know that Christ loves me, I should not dare to trust in him[d]. Wherefore, in the first direct act of faith, I believe that God is "reconciled to me[e]," that Christ has "rescued me from hell," and "established my title to all the blessings included in the promises[f]." Just as my tenant believed me, when once I sent him word, "that I had cancelled his bond and forgiven his debt[g]." Just as my servant believed me, when I freely gave him a little farm[h]. And just as you believed the estate your own, which was bequeathed to you in your late father's last will. You first believed your title good, and then took possession of it as your own[i]. I am sensible, this is not what is called the orthodox opinion; it is more "re-

a D. p. 296. 362. 345. 315. *b* M. p. 176. *c* D. p. 358, 359.
d D. p. 312, 313. *e* D. p. 169. *f* D. p 181.
g D. p. 298. *h* D. p 273. *i* D. p. 255.

fined and exalted [k]," and more exactly agreeable to the truth [l].

Paul. But, my dear Theron, how do you know that Christ, pardon, grace, and glory are yours? What evidence have you for your belief? A belief, on which you venture your precious soul for a whole eternity?

Ther. The holy Scripture clears up my title [m], and enables me to appropriate to myself in particular, what is given, granted, and made over in the written word to sinners in general [n]. To explain myself, it is written in Isa. ix. 6. *To us a Son is given* [p]. Isa. liii. 6. *The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all* [q]. 1 Cor. xv. 1. *Christ died for our sins* [r]. John vi. 32. *My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven* [s]. 1 John v. 9. *This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life* [t]. Acts xiii. 28. *Unto you is preached the forgiveness of sins* [u]. Isa. xliii. 25. *I, even I, am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions* [x]. And by faith I appropriate all this to myself. I believe that Christ is mine, given to me in particular: my sins in particular were laid on him: he died for my sins in particular: he is my bread: eternal life is mine: my sins are forgiven: my transgressions are blotted out. And so, according to Scripture, *I believe the love that God hath to me.* 1 John iv. 16. *I believe I shall be saved.* Acts xv 11. *I believe Christ loved me, and gave himself for me.* Gal. ii. 20 [y]. With Thomas, I say, *My Lord, my God!* John xx. 28. "I am persuaded in my heart, that Jesus is my Lord, who bought me with his blood; that Jesus is my God, who will exert all his adorable perfections for my good [z]. This is faith, according to the common acceptation of the word believe [a]. And this faith our Saviour himself allows to be genuine [b]. And if I should not thus believe, I should make God a liar [c].

Paul. How make God a liar, my dear Theron? Hath God

k D. p. 295. *l* D. p. 312, 313. 334, 336. *m* D. p. 295.
n D. p. 305. 314. *p* D. p. 308. *q* D. p. 304.
r D. p. 318. *s* D. p. 307. *t* D. p. 319.
u D. p. 308. *x* D. p. 329. *y* D. p. 326.
z D. p. 330. *a* D. p. 297. *b* D. p. 330.
c D. p. 354.

said that Christ died with an absolute design to save all mankind? And hath God expressly declared, that he will save them all? That you think yourself obliged in conscience, while out of Christ, to believe he died with an absolute design to save you, and that God will certainly save you; and that it would be no better than making God a liar, not to believe so?

Ther. No, no; God hath never said any such thing, expressly or implicitly. Yea, God has plainly enough declared, that Christ died with an absolute design to save only the elect; and that in fact, no other ever will be saved. This we are all agreed in [d].

Paul. Did you know then that you was one of the elect before you believed? That you thought yourself bound in conscience to believe that you should be saved; lest otherwise you should be guilty of so horrible a sin as to make God a liar?

Ther. No; by no means. For no man can know his election till after faith and justification.

Paul. How then could you make God a liar? Is it any where declared in his written word, that your sins in particular are forgiven, and that you shall be saved?

Ther. No; so far from it, that before I believed my sins were forgiven, they were in fact not forgiven: but I was under condemnation and wrath.

Paul. But surely here is some great mystery. You say, you believe that Christ died with a design to save only the elect, and that you did not know that you was elected; and yet you believed that Christ died with a design to save you. You say, your sins were not forgiveu before you believed; and yet you believed they were forgiven. You seem, my friend, to be so far from any danger of making God a liar, by not believing, that rather you make him a liar by believing your sins are forgiven, when God says they are not. At least, to make the best of it, I do not see what evidence you have for your belief. Nay, how can such a faith as your's

d Boston on the Two Covenants, p. 27. 34. N. B. He says, Isa. liii. 6. (a text Theron just now applied to himself,) respects only the elect. p. 30.

possibly be the result of evidence, and of a rational conviction? For the case does not seem to admit of any evidence. For how can there be any evidence to prove the truth of that which as yet is not true? Pray, unfold this riddle, like a right honest man, and tell me the secret of the whole affair.

Ther. This matter is honestly stated, and that with great exactness, in Mr. Marshal's Gospel Mystery; a book, my Aspasio values next to the Bible [e]. These are the very words of that celebrated author: "Let it be well observed, that the reason why we are to assure ourselves in our faith that God freely giveth Christ and his salvation to us in particular, is not because it is a truth before we believe it, but because it becometh a certain truth when we believe; and because it never will be true, except we do in some measure persuade and assure ourselves that it is so. We have no absolute promise or declaration in Scripture, that God certainly will or doth give Christ and his salvation to any one of us in particular; neither do we know it to be true already by Scripture, or sense, or reason, before we assure ourselves absolutely of it. Yea, we are without Christ's salvation at present, in a state of sin and misery, under the curse and wrath of God. Only we are bound, by the command of God, thus to assure ourselves: and the Scripture doth sufficiently warrant us that we shall not deceive ourselves in believing a lie: but *according to our faith, so shall it be to us.*" Matt. ix. 29. (N. B.) "This is a strange kind of assurance, far different from other ordinary kinds; and, therefore, no wonder if it be found weak and imperfect, and difficult to be obtained, and assaulted with many doubtings. We are constrained to believe other things on the clear evidence we have that they are true, and would remain true, whether we believe them or no; so that we cannot deny our assent, without rebelling against the light of our senses, reason, or conscience. But here our assurance is not impressed on our thoughts by any evidence of the thing; but we must work it out in ourselves by the assistance of the Spirit of God [f]." Labouring for it, as my dear Aspasio explains the words, "incessantly and assiduously, until our Lord come [g]." *What*

[e] D. p. 336. [f] M. p 173, 174. [g] M. Preface, p. 7.

things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them[h]. Mark ix. 24.

Paul. I have on the table a paper containing twelve short

[h] Reader, stop, and think a minute! What is it that we are thus to assure ourselves of, without any evidence from Scripture, or sense, or reason? That *God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life?* No. For this is true before we believe it, and whether we believe it or not: and it is a truth plainly taught in Scripture. What, then? "That God freely giveth Christ and his salvation to me in particular," according to Mr. Marshal. That "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine," as Mr. Hervey expresses it. And now it is true enough, this is "not declared in Scripture; is not true before we believe it; and we must believe without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." Thus the point is stated in a book Mr. Hervey approves of next to the Bible.

Objection. "No," says Mr. Gelatly, a great admirer of Mr. Hervey, "no such thing. We do not believe we have a *saving interest* in Christ, we only believe we have a *common interest*. A *saving interest* is not made over to us in the gospel grant; but a *common interest* is our's by a free deed of gift. Wherefore, I believe I have a *common interest*; I claim it, I demand it, I take possession of it as my own: and this is faith." (See Mr. Gel. Observations, &c. p. 76. 88.)

Answer. You claim, you take possession! Of what? my friend. Of a *common interest*. This is your's, you say; this you claim, this you possess: and this is ALL. A *common interest*, and no more. You claim no more, and you can have no more on this foot: for you acknowledge your deed of gift conveys *no more*. But Messrs. Harvey and Marshal claim more. They take possession of a *saving interest* as their own, and therefore honestly confess, they have no evidence from scripture, sense, or reason. And if Mr. G. should venture to put in as high a claim, I hope he will make as honest a concession.

Objec. "Yes." But "I believe that Christ is mine, and that I shall have life and salvation by him." (P. 103.)

Ans. "Salvation!" But this is a *saving interest*, not made over in your deed of gift, as you own. The Bible no where declares, that you in particular "shall have life and salvation." You believe now, "without any evidence from scripture, sense, or reason," just as Mr. Marshal says. So I see your faith is the same as his; but he is frank and open-hearted, and tells the honest truth to the world.

Objec. But if a *common interest* in Christ, and salvation are mine, by the free and absolute grant of the Gospel, this gives me a warrant, by faith, to claim and take possession of Christ and salvation as my own for ever; i. e. to believe that Christ is mine, and that I shall have life and salvation by him. (P. 88. 90.)

Ans. That is, if a *common interest* is mine, this gives me a warrant to believe a *saving interest* is mine. And so, according to Mr. Marshal, "though a *saving interest* is not mine before I believe; yet if I believe it is mine, then it will be mine." But of this more presently.

queries, relative to the point in hand. If it is not disagreeable, I will read it to you.

Ther. If you please, sir, I should be glad to hear it.

Paul. It was wrote this very day, on reading that remarkable passage in Mr. Marshal you have just recited, and on a general view of the controversy, as stated by him and by your friend Aspasio, and as expecting to see you this evening.

TWELVE QUERIES.

Quer. 1. Did God ever require any one of the sons of Adam to believe any proposition to be true, unless it was in fact true before he believed it? We are required to believe there is a God; that Christ is the Son of God; that he died for sinners; that he sent his apostles to preach the gospel to every creature; that he that believeth shall be saved; that he that believeth not, shall be damned; that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. In a word, we are required to believe all the truths taught in the *Bible*. But then, they are all true, before we believe them, and whether we believe them, or not.

Quer. 2. Are not all these truths contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, which it is necessary for us to know and believe in order to our salvation? Is not this a point which has ever been strenuously maintained by all Protestants? But are they not all true before we believe them, and whether we believe them or not?

Quer. 3. Is it safe to venture our souls for eternity, merely on the truth of a proposition no where contained in the Bible? "Theron, Christ died for thee in particular, and thy sins are forgiven." Is this proposition contained in the Bible? Is it taught in Scripture? If it had been, would it not have been true before it was believed? and whether it was ever believed or no? If Theron ventures his soul upon the truth of this proposition, and finds himself at last deceived, can he blame the Bible? Was it contained in that book? Did he learn it thence? Nay, he owns he did not. But then he thinks God has required him to work up himself to such a belief, and promised, that *according to his faith, so shall it be unto him.* And yet owns, he has no evidence of the thing from Scripture, sense, or reason.

Quer. 4. Did God ever require any one of the sons of Adam to believe any thing to be true, without sufficient previous evidence that it was true? Look through the Bible. Where shall we find one instance? Not in the Old Testament; nor in the New Testament: no, not even in one of these particulars, these writers usually refer to, to illustrate and confirm this "strange kind of assurance."

Not in Abraham, who *against hope believed in hope,* that he should have a son; Sarah being not only barren, but past the age of child-bearing. For he had sufficient evidence for the thing he believed. Even the known, the plain, the express promise of the God of truth [i].

Not in the Israelites, who left Egypt, set out for Canaan, but *could not enter in because of unbelief.* For they had sufficient evidence to believe, that God was able and willing to do all that he had engaged [k]. And that if they would trust his wisdom, power, goodness, and fidelity, be at his beck, and march under his banner, and *wholly follow him,* (Num. xxxii. 11.) they might safely enter, and easily conquer the country, although their *walls were built up to heaven, and the sons of Anak were there.*

Not in David, who believed that he should be king of Israel; for he had sufficient evidence for his belief, from the express promise of Almighty God [l].

i D. p. 191. 355.

k God's promise, Exod. iii. 17, to bring the Israelites to Canaan, did not absolutely oblige him to bring every individual, man, woman, and child, there.—Some might die by the way; and yet God *not be a liar.* Exod. xxxii. 27, 28. Yea, many did die by the way; and yet it is *impossible for God to lie.* Heb. vi. 18. That phrase in Num. xiv. 34, proves that God did not think himself bound by his promise to bring them every one there, let them be ever so perverse. But if God was not absolutely obliged to bring every one there, then no one in particular, when they set out from Egypt, had sufficient warrant to believe and say, "I shall get to Canaan: I know I shall: God has promised, and I should make him a liar if I did not believe, that I, in particular, should get safe there." After that declaration in Num. xiv. 31, Caleb and Joshua had a good warrant for such a belief. And so, after we know we are united to Christ by a true and lively faith, we may be certain that we shall get safe to heaven at last. John iii. 16. & v. 24. But not before: as there is no absolute promise of salvation to all mankind. Gal. iii. 29. John iii. 18. Rom. ix. 15. 21. 2 Cor. i. 20. Compare Josh. i. 6. with Josh. vii. 5. & Heb. vi. 18. See also Num. xxxii. 15.

l D. p. 324. 357. 362.

Not in the pious Jews in Babylon. (Isai. i. 10.) For although they could not see the least probability, from outward appearances, of their return to their beloved Zion; yet they had a good warrant to trust in the Lord, and stay themselves upon their God, who was able, and who had expressly and absolutely promised, at the end of seventy years, to bring them back [a].

Nor in Peter walking on the water. For he had sufficient evidence, from Christ's commanding him to come to him, to believe that Christ would keep him from sinking [b].

Nor in the disciples; so often upbraided for their unbelief of Christ's resurrection. For they had sufficient evidence that he was risen [c]. Nor in those who had the faith of miracles, and could say to this mountain, *Be thou removed and cast into the sea;* for they had sufficient evidence, to believe it would be done, resulting from Christ's express promise in the case. When they were called to work miracles in confirmation of the Christian religion, they had not the least reason to doubt in their hearts, but that he who had authorised them, would, for his honour's sake, and for his word's sake, perform the miracles which they were inspired to declare should be done [d]. Nor in those who came to Christ to be healed; for they had sufficient evidence, to believe that Christ was able to do it [e]. Nor indeed is there one instance in the Bible, of God's requiring a man to believe any thing whatsoever, without sufficient previous evidence of its truth.

How incredible, therefore, how infinitely incredible, is it, that God should first put the Bible into our hands, as rational creatures, and charge us strictly to adhere to it on pain of eternal damnation! (Rev. xxii. 18.) and then suspend the eternal salvation of all mankind on their believing a thing to be true, no where contained in the Bible; yea, of the truth of which they have no evidence, from "Scripture, sense, or reason; yea, which, as yet, is not true, but flatly contradictory to divine revelation: and sentence men to eternal damnation, for not believing, what they would be glad to believe with all their hearts, had they sufficient evidence of

a D. p. 321. *b* D. p. 331. *c* D. p. 355, 356.
d M. p. 147. *e* M. p. 173.

its truth! For there is no man but would be glad to know, that instead of the eternal torments of hell, he should have the eternal joys of heaven [g].

Quer. 5. Is not this the difference between faith and pre-

[g] Some who are in this scheme, pretend to be great enemies to *carnal reason*. But they must renounce all reason, and the bible too, or one would think they never can be full proof against conviction. But, they say, we must become fools for Christ. But do they really think, that Christianity is, in fact, a foolish religion? Christianity, which is the wisdom of God, and which exhibits a most exact picture of all the divine perfections; a picture infinitely brighter than that which was given in the creation of the world. The work of our redemption is the master-piece of all God's works, and Christianity the brightest display of all God's perfections. Its wisdom, glory, and beauty, are such, as gain the attention of all the exalted geniuses of the heavenly world. 1 Pet. i. 12. What an infinite reproach to God and his Son is it then, for us mortals to misrepresent this rational, divine, and glorious religion, so as to make it, in fact, one of the most foolish, inconsistent, and absurd things imaginable! and then, to hide the shame of its nakedness, raise an outcry about carnal reason! By this means, many poor sinners have been early led to look upon experimental religion, as a silly, foolish thing; although in reality there is nothing in it, but what is as rational as the mathematics. Yea, if true religion were not perfectly rational, how could it please the infinitely wise God, who is the fountain and source of all reason? how could it be suited to raise, exalt, and ennoble rational creatures? or how could it deserve to be called by the name of WISDOM, by Solomon, the wisest of men?

Objec. "But if the religion of the bible is so rational a thing, why are not Socinians, Pelagians, &c. pleased with it, who so greatly cry up reason?"

Ans. Merely because it is so contrary to the darling corruptions of their hearts. Our blessed Saviour, who well understood human nature, and the nature of his own religion, affirms that this is the true cause. John iii. 19, 20, 21. Had they but good hearts, they would be charmed with the wisdom and glory of the Christian religion, (John viii. 47.) even as the inhabitants of heaven be. Eph. iii. 10. For after all their glorying, their own schemes, although a little better glossed over, yet in reality are as inconsistent and absurd, as this that Theron pleads for. In the apostolic age, divine truths were set in so clear a light, that the worst of heretics were obliged, were necessitated to see, that they were inconsistent with themselves; and so were forced to be self-condemned, as is plainly implied in Tit. iii. 10, 11. *An heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject: knowing that he is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being* CONDEMNED OF HIMSELF. And, no doubt, there is light enough in the Holy Scriptures, to produce the same still, were it brought out and held before the eyes of heretics in this age. 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. For the truth, and only the truth, is, or can be universally consistent: but all false schemes, follow them up, will appear to be inconsistent. Reason is wholly on the side of truth, and true religion is the only religion that is perfectly rational and consistent throughout.

sumption, as the words are commonly understood among mankind, viz. that in the one, we believe because we have sufficient evidence, in the other, without any evidence at all? And is not this the constant character of all self-deceived hypocrites, that they have "a real persuasion in their hearts" of the love of God to their souls, and a confident expectation of eternal life, without any real evidence? Matt. vii. 21. 27. Luke xiii. 25, 26, 27. xviii. 9. 11.

Quer. 6. Is not this faith anologous to that which the devil tempted our Saviour to exercise? when, (Luke iv. 8.) *He brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence. For it is written,* (Psal. xci. 11.) *He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee, and in their hands they shall hold thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.* Here was a promise, a precious promise, out of God's own word. And *he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar.* The devil urged our Saviour to appropriate, and take it home to himself in particular; and be verily "persuaded in his heart" he should be safe, although he cast himself down. However, on a critical examination of the texts the devil recited, there could be no evidence from that of safety to Christ, if he had cast himself down. So therefore he must believe really without any evidence from "Scripture, sense, or reason;" and the devil would have had him think, that according to his faith, so should it be to him.

Quer. 7. If the devil attempted thus to delude our blessed Saviour himself, by misapplying a precious promise, has he not courage? Has he not power? Has he not will? to attempt to deluge poor sinners in a like manner; that thereby, devil as he is, he may accomplish their eternal ruin! And are we not forewarned from heaven, of a false spirit, and charged not to believe every spirit? (1 John. iv. 1.) For that *satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.* (2. Cor. xi 14.)

Quer. 8. Did ever Christ or his apostles define faith to be "a real persuasion that Christ died for me in particular, and that pardon, grace, and glory, are mine?" They call it coming to Christ, receiving Christ, trusting in Christ, believing

in Christ, believing on Christ, &c. but never call it believing Christ is mine, and that my sins are forgiven. It is true, the saints in the Old Testament, and in the New, usually speak the language of assurance. And it is as true, they had sufficient evidence of their good estate from their sanctification. This was their evidence. They knew no other. All who pretended to belong to Christ without this, were branded for liars. (1 John. ii. 4.) But where do we ever read of their endeavouring to work up themselves to an assurance, professedly without any evidence?

Quer. 9. Is there one in all St. Paul's catalogue of believers in Heb. xi. whose faith consisted in believing without any evidence[g]?

Quer. 10. Were ever any awakened sinners invited and urged to believe, by Christ or his apostles, and told at the same time, that the thing they were to believe was not true as yet? Nor had they any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, it ever would be true; but, however, most solemnly assured by the promise and oath of God, if they would venture to believe without any evidence at all in the case, it should be according to their faith. Was this the thing the apostles dwelt upon in all their preaching? Was this the thing they urged awakened sinners to with all their might? No: they never heard of it; neither came it into their hearts to think that this was justifying faith.

Quer 11. Is not the thing believed a lie? It was not true before it was believed, as is granted. But believing an untruth to be true, cannot make it true.—It cannot, according to reason: it cannot, according to Scripture: it cannot, according to experience. It was never known, since the world began, to produce this effect in any one instance, unless in this case: and we have no evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, that it ever did in this.

Quer. 12. Is it not astonishing, and one of the most unaccountable things in the world, that a rational creature, with the bible in his hands, should ever be able to work up himself to believe what he knows is not yet true; and what he knows he has no evidence that it ever will be true? No won-

[g] D. p. 326.

der these men are so much troubled with doubts. No wonder they are afraid they believe a lie. No wonder they are obliged so much to strive and struggle against this unbelief; a kind of unbelief we no where read of in the bible; a kind of conflict no saint ever had, that stands on Scripture record, as themselves are obliged to own [h]. To struggle daily to believe, without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason; to have *this* for their Christian conflict—an unheard-of conflict in the apostolic age; instead of struggling against this kind of unbelief, Scripture, sense, and reason, all join to justify it. As nothing can be plainer than that we ought never to believe any thing with more confidence than in exact proportion to our evidence. To do otherwise, and that professedly, is the most presumptuous thing in the world. And to think by being thus strong in the faith we shall give glory to God, is the very first-born of delusion that even satan himself ever begot in the heart of a fallen creature [i].

h M. p. 186.

i D. p. 355. 342, 248. 369. Wendelinus and other ancient and modern writers, without the least scruple, say, that, in the direct act of justifying faith, I believe "my sins are forgiven;" "God is reconciled to me," &c. &c. Others who seem to be in the same scheme, are more cautious in their expressions, and, to avoid the charge of "believing a lie," they word themselves so ambiguously, that it is very difficult to know what they mean. For it has often been urged against this scheme, "If faith consists in believing my sins are forgiven, then they are forgiven before I believe, or else I believe a lie." And it is wonderful to see what methods have been taken by writers to avoid this difficulty. However, when all is said and done, there are in nature but these three ways to solve the difficulty: either, (1st.) to say that our sins are really forgiven before we believe, or, (2d.) that although they are not, yet, according to the tenour of the covenant of grace, they shall be, if we do but believe that they are, or, (3d.) a belief that "my sins are forgiven," must be left out of the definition of justifying faith.—The first was the solution of Antinomians in former ages; but it is so contrary to the express declaration of Scripture, (John iii. 18.) that it will not do. The third gives up the whole scheme they contend for; and so that will not do. The second, which Mr. Marshal has taken, bad as it is, is the only one that is left. Now if they all mean as he does, it is to be wished, they would all speak as plain, that we may precisely know what they intend. This would soon bring the controversy to an issue. But when I read their books, they seem to me sometimes to solve the difficulty one way, and sometimes another. Sometimes they represent as though "pardon was mine absolutely before faith;" and sometimes just the contrary. Sometimes they say, "We have the clearest evidence from Scripture for this belief:" and sometimes they say, "We have no evidence

Paul. Thus, my dear Theron, you may see a little by these queries, what I think of this kind of faith. But there is one most mysterious thing I desire you to explain. Not why you doubt; I do not wonder you are often assaulted with doubts. Nor do I wonder your friend Aspasio meets with the same conflict[k]. You are both men of too much sense and reason not to feel yourselves a little shocked sometimes, in spite of all your principles. But this I wonder at, I am surprised, how you ever came to believe. Pray be so kind, as to give me a particular narrative, how faith was wrought in your heart.

Ther. I had lately made a visit at Philenor's, with my dear Aspasio; where, in the kindest and most affectionate manner, I was urged to believe; assured, it was my duty and interest, and that God's promise and oath were engaged, that I should never be made ashamed; but it should be according to my faith. And all the precious promises, and gracious invitations in God's holy word, were set in order before me, in the most moving language, and I was argued out of all my objections. Whereupon, after my return home, as I was walking in my garden, longing to have an interest in Christ, meditating on the promises, striving to take them home to myself, praying for the spirit to witness with my spirit, that I was a child of God, thus earnestly endeavouring to work up myself to this assurance, and thus waiting for the Holy Spirit; as I was

from scripture, sense, or reason." Sometimes faith is raised up to "a persuasion that I in particular am pardoned, and shall certainly have eternal life:" and then again it sinks down into a mere "belief that I have a *common interest* in Gospel-offers, such as even reprobates have." And this is all I am to believe. But, in a few pages, faith is raised up again as high as ever; so that one knows not where to find them: they seem to be pinched, and not to know how to get out. Therefore, they now run here, and then run there; but know not what to do, to avoid the glaring inconsistence of their scheme: and yet dread to give it up.

At present, for aught that appears, Mr. Marshal's solution is the best that the case can admit of. To be sure, Mr. Hervey thinks it the best; as he esteems Mr. Marshal's Mystery next to the bible. And in his preface to Mr. Marshal's book, he says, "I shall rejoice in the prospect of having the Gospel-mystery of sanctification, stand as a fourth volume to Theron and Aspasio." And, therefore, I have a just warrant, in the present controversy, to consider it as such, and to view all four volumes as containing one complete scheme.

k D. p. 353.

thinking on the dying love of Christ, those words seemed to be spoken to me, *O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?* Wherefore dost thou doubt of my love to thee, for whom I have shed my blood? I believed; I was full of love and joy, and for several days all my thoughts were taken up about heavenly things. I was weaned from the world. All old things seemed to be passed away, and all things to become new.

Paul. Let any Christless, graceless sinner, in your circumstances, believe, as you believed; and from principles which are natural to mankind, he would feel as you felt. And, as all your affections might flow from natural principles, they were no evidence of a supernatural change; as you may see proved at large, in a book I have as good an opinion of, as your Aspasio has of Mr. Marshal's Mystery, &c[l]. Therefore, from these effects of your faith, you cannot argue it was no delusion. Because, if it had been a delusion, it might have produced just the same. You will suffer me, therefore, to inquire, *What warrant had you for this belief?* For although *all the promises of God are* IN CHRIST, *Yea, and Amen,* (2 Cor. i. 20.) yet to him that is *out of Christ, God is a consuming fire.* He is *condemned,* and the *wrath of God abideth on him.* (John iii. 18. 36.) Pray tell me, must not a sinner be in Christ before he is entitled to the promises?

Ther. Yes. For it it his union with, and relation to, Christ, which lays the foundation for his interest in all the blessings purchased by him. First, we are *children* and then *heirs.* (Rom. viii. 17.) First, we are ingrafted into Christ, *the true vine,* and then partake of the sap. (John xv. 1. 7.) First, we are married to Christ, and then we are interested in all his riches and glory[m].

Paul. A charming truth this, my Theron! And if you will attend to it, and be consistent with yourself, it must lead you back from the paths of error, to the high road which goes directly to the heavenly Zion. For, if we must be *in* Christ, before we are interested in his benefits; we must *know*

l Mr. Edwards on Religious Affections.

m See all this finely represented, as well as rightly stated, D. p. 213. 218.—Whether in a consistence with the rest of his scheme, we shall see hereafter.

that we are in Christ, before we can know our interests in his benefits. And, therefore, the first direct act of faith cannot consist in believing that his benefits are mine. Arietta was first married to Philenor, before her debts devolved on him, and all his dignity was derived to her. Had she been carried away with a fond dream, with a full persuasion that Philenor, and all his riches and honour, were her's, before marriage, and to the neglect of matrimonial rites, she might have enjoyed the comfort of her dream; but must have really lived in widowhood, and died in debt, never the better for the "wealthy and illustrious Philenor." As this is your Aspasio's own simile, I hope you will the more diligently attend to it[n]. Justifying faith, is that act whereby we, being *dead to the law*, are *married to Christ*. (Rom. vii. 4. 2 Cor. xi. 2.) And after marriage we may justly say, *My beloved is mine, and I am his*, (Cant. ii. 16.) but not *before*. (Eph. ii. 12. John iii. 18.)

Ther. Yes. Let me tell you, that any Christless, graceless sinner in the world, has equal right, with the best saint, to adopt this language, and say, *my beloved is mine, and I am his*. For this ties the very knot; this constitutes the union [o].

Paul. I think for once, my Theron, your dear Aspasio himself seems to contradict you. You doubtless remember his words. "*My beloved is mine, and I am his*; I dare not say, is the poesy of the mystic ring; but it is the undoubted effect of this divine union [p]."

Ther. Sure I am, my dear Aspasio taught me by the first direct act of faith, to go to God, and say, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." Not because I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast, but previous to any reflection on inherent graces. I am not therefore, first, by reflection, to know, that I am married to Christ, before I call him my own.—Yea, rather, I must first know, that he is mine, before I can, before I dare, come to him. This, I am sure, is my Aspasio's doctrine [q].

Paul. But then Christ and all his spiritual blessings are your's, before you are in Christ; which is contrary to what Aspasio affirms [r]. And contrary to the plain sense of the

n D. p. 215. o D. p. 343. 344. p D. p. 218. q D. p. 312, 313. 358. 362.
r D. p. 213. 218.

New Testament, as you but just now stated the matter yourself.—But to dwell upon this inconsistence no longer; pray, tell me what warrant you had from Scripture, to believe, that Christ and all his spiritual blessing were your's?

Ther. I was awakened to some sense of my danger of eternal ruin, I longed to believe that my sins were pardoned, and that Christ was mine; but I could not see my title clear. Aspasio told me, it was "perfectly clear." That I had as good a warrant for this belief, as a neighbouring clergyman had to take any book in my library, whom I had lately assured, "that he was as welcome to any book as though they were all his own." Yea, as good a warrant for this belief, as one of my servants had to believe me, when I gave him a farm for his own [t].

Paul. Shocking!—I would not treat an awakened sinner so, for all the world. But how did Aspasio make it out, that your title to pardon was thus clear, when Mr. Marshal, his favourite author, owns there is no evidence of the thing from Scripture, sense, or reason?

Ther. He referred me to John vii. 37. *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.* But you thirst, said he, therefore to you this promise is made [u]. And he was always encouraging me to this belief, by taking a kind notice of my earnest prayers, sorrows, tears, good desires, and sense of unworthiness [x]. And from this quarter my first encouragement arose to hope and believe, that Christ, pardon, grace, and glory, were mine.

Paul. But according to this, O my Theron, your own awakenings, earnest prayers, sorrows, tears, good desires, and sense of unworthiness, laid the first foundation of your faith. This was the secret language of your heart, "to such a one as I am, the promises belong: and so I may safely believe, they are all my own." As much your own as your servant's little farm was his. And if your encouragement to believe, took its rise from your own inherent qualifications; if your own goodness, in whatever humble form, emboldened you to come to Christ; your hope of acceptance was really bottomed on

t D. p. 269. 273. *u* D. p. 270. *x* D. p. 157, 158. 207, 208. 220. 265, 266. 289, 290. 293, 294.

your own righteousness: and so yours is a self-righteous faith. And if this be the case, a clear sight of the badness of your heart and of the strictness of the law, would entirely kill your faith. (Rom. vii. 9.) If your good desires, like so much money in hand, encouraged you to come to Christ; your courage would fail you, did you know, that the best desires you ever had, according to law and strict justice, merit eternal damnation. Did you thus feel yourself without money, you would not dare to come.

Ther. But is it not true? Are not the promises made to those that *thirst*? John. vii. 37. That *labour and are heavy laden*? Mat. xi. 28, &c.

Paul. These are not promises, my Theron, which convey a title to pardon and salvation to sinners out of Christ, on condition of their good desires. They are rather invitations to a union with Christ by a true and living faith. They give a sinner a good warrant to come to Christ: to come *without money and without price*; (Isai. lv. 1.) and those who thus come, shall find rest to their souls. But they give no grounds to one out of Christ, encouraged by his own righteousness to believe that pardon, grace, and glory, are his.

Ther. I did not mean that my own good desires, prayers, &c. gave me a right to believe. I had a good right before. As an "abandoned sinner[x]," I had an actual right to Christ and all his benefits, by an "actual gift from the almighty majesty," just as my servant had to his little farm by my donation[y].

Paul. After you had given the little farm to your servant, it was his. It was his, before he believed it his. Your donation made it his, and not his belief. It was his before he believed it, and whether he believed it, or not. He had sufficient evidence to believe it his, previous to his belief. Now if Christ and all his benefits are yours in this sense, then you was justified, adopted, sanctified, and entitled to eternal glory, while secure in sin; months, nay, years, before any of your conversation with Aspasio. Yea, your title is as old as the gospel; which you consider as your deed of gift,

[x] D. p. 307, 308. [y] D. p. 272, 273.

or as Christ's last Will and Testament, in which all these legacies were bequeathed to you. Your title, your absolute title, commenced at the death of the testator. "When your old acquaintance Charicles left you a handsome legacy, what did you do to establish your title, and make it your own?"

Ther. "My title was pre-established, by my friend's donation. I had nothing to do, but to claim, to accept, and to possess." And I did the very same in the present case[z]. And ever since this first act of faith, "On this unalterable ground, I assert and maintain my title. Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ, and all his spiritual blessings are mine; because all these precious privileges are consigned over to me in the everlasting gospel[a]." This is the proper notion of believing. "When I sent a message to my tenant, assuring him, I had cancelled the bond, and forgiven his debt; he believed the message to be true. So I give credit to the gracious declarations of my God. So I believe[b]."

z D. p. 255. *a* D. p. 362.

b D. p. 297, 298. And with Theron agrees Mr. Boston, who, in his book on the Two Covenants, maintains, that Christ, in his last Will and Testament, did actually bequeath regenerating grace, justification, adoption, sanctification, and eternal life, freely, absolutely, and unconditionally, to every sinner of Adam's race. And adds, that Christ himself is also the executor of this will, and by his office as such, obliged to make out all these legacies to all the legatees, that are pleased to put in their claim, and make their demands. And faith, according to him, consists in believing all is mine, and in claiming and taking possession of all as my own. (See p. 114. 199. 214.) And arises from no higher principle than self-preservation. (P. 262, 263.)

Saint Paul used to say, *If children, then heirs,* (Rom. viii. 17. Gal. iii. 29.) But according to this new Gospel, it is, if sinners, then heirs. And this will be reckoned good news for unregenerate sinners. They are no longer at God's sovereign mercy, according to Rom. ix. 15. Nor need they come as poor beggars, according to Luke xviii. 13. Their title to all things "is perfectly clear," even while unregenerate and out of Christ. And they may come as heirs, who have a legal right to make demands, and put in their claim, and say, "Pardon is mine, I claim it, I demand it as my own." And the executor is obliged to answer their demands, and give out their legacies. This scheme, were it true, would suit corrupt nature, even better than the Arminian. As we all had rather have estates left to us by wills, than be at the pains to work for them, so it is easier to claim and demand heaven, than to do as the Pharisee did in Luke xviii. 12. Those texts in Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12. & ix. 15, 16, 17. on which they pretend to found their scheme, are plainly nothing to the purpose. For God does not say, "This is the covenant I will make with all the sinful race of

Paul. To whom are Christ, pardon, grace, and glory, consigned over and conveyed in the Gospel-grant? What are their names? Or what are their characters? Who are the men so highly favoured? In wills and in deeds of gift, you know, the parties to whom any thing is bequeathed, or given, are mentioned by name. Is it so in the Gospel-grant? Are all these blessings entailed on believers, or on sinners, as such?

Ther. On sinners, on all sinners of Adam's race; and that considered merely as sinners: as my dear Aspasio proved at large[c]. And that which is thus freely given to every sinner, any sinner in particular has a good warrant to look upon as his own. Thus, then, stands my warrant to believe. All these blessings are given to sinners, as such: but I am a sinner; therefore, all these blessings are given to me[d].

Paul. That is, "all sinners are justified, adopted, sanctified, and entitled to eternal life: but I am a sinner; therefore I am justified, adopted, sanctified, and entitled to eternal life." But, my dear Theron, if you know what you say, if you really mean as you say, and if you affirm these sentiments are "strictly conformable to the unerring oracles" of God, then all Adam's race are, according to you, actually justified, adopted, sanctified, and entitled to eternal glory. And thus your devout Aspasio carries matters further than even the famous Dr. John Taylor, whose key to the Apostolical writings is not half so heterodox as this; how much so-

Adam; I will write my law in their hearts," &c. But God says, "*This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel,*" *But he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly.* Rom. ii. 28, 29. *The children of the promise are counted for the seed.* Rom. ix. 8. *If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* Gal. iii. 29. *But if out of Christ, we are condemned, and the wrath of God abideth on us.* John iii. 18. 36. And we can claim nothing. No, not another moment of time, nor liberty to breathe another breath in God's world. We have not a title to one minute's forbearance; but God may send us to hell this instant. Rom. iii. 19. Gal. iii. 10. *Object.* But it is said to the elder brother, *All that I have is thine.* Luke xv. 31. *Ans.* Yes; and with design to describe the temper of a Pharisee's heart. The younger son represented Publicans and Sinners, and the elder the Pharisees. (See ver. 1, 2.) The poor Publican thought he had no claim to make, but lay at mercy. Luke xviii 13. The Pharisees said in their hearts, all is our own.

c D. p. 298. 319. *d* D. p. 305.

ever condemned by all the friends of vital piety. For he only supposes, that all within the visible church, are justified, adopted, &c. and not all Adam's race.

Besides, how is all this consistent with the words you just now cited out of Mr. Marshal's Mystery, a book your Aspasio values next to the bible? "We have no absolute promise or declaration in Scripture, that God certainly will or doth give Christ and his salvation to any one of us in particular; neither do we know it to be true already, by Scripture, sense, or reason, before we assure ourselves absolutely of it. Yea, we are without Christ's salvation at present, in a state of sin and misery, under the curse and wrath of God. This is a strange kind of assurance. Therefore, no wonder if it be found weak and imperfect, and difficult to be obtained, and assaulted with many doubtings. We are constrained to believe other things on the clear evidence we have, that they are true, whether we believe them or no; so that we cannot deny our assent, without rebelling against the light of our senses, reason, or conscience. But here our assurance is not impressed on our thoughts by any evidence of the thing; but we must work it out in ourselves, by the assistance of the Spirit of GOD."

Yea, how is all this consistent with your own experience, and with the experience of your Aspasio? For if all spiritual blessings are by a deed of gift absolutely made over to all sinners of Adam's race, and that considered merely as such, plainly in the Gospel, so that their "title is perfectly clear;" then, as true as the Gospel is true, all are absolutely entitled to pardon, grace, and glory, before they believe, and whether they believe or not. And I never hear of you, or your friend, doubting the truth of the Gospel itself. How then can you have any doubts about your title to heaven? Why was you so backward to believe your title? Or why was your friend so ready to "feel for you, and sympathize with you?" How could it be so difficult to believe, while at the same time he "beheld his title perfectly clear?" Did ever any mortal act thus as to temporal things? Was ever a son of Adam

[e] D. p. 269. 353.

put to great difficulty to believe an inheritance to be his own, when he saw with his own eyes, "his title was perfectly clear," and had the deed of gift well executed in his own hands? My dear Theron, I am even tempted to doubt, whether you yourselves believe your own scheme. Yea, it seems plain, you are all the while afraid you are deluded. And no wonder, says Mr. Marshal, for you have no evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason. Pray, did your Aspasio ever attempt to prove his scheme out of the bible?

Ther. Yes. And once speaking of his differing from the orthodox, I remember he said, "I dare not purchase their approbation, I dare not attempt a coalition of sentiments. Pray, my dear friend, said he to me, what is the standard of orthodoxy? Is it the word of revelation? This speaks once, yea, twice, nay, some hundreds of times in our favour [f]." And first and last, I am apt to think he mentioned above an hundred texts of Scripture, to prove his point.

Paul. Out of this great number, pray select some of the most plain and full to the purpose; and on which he seemed to lay the greatest stress; and let us carefully examine them.

Ther. There are many texts which teach us that God has given his Son to a lost world. Isa. ix. 6. *To us a Son is given* [g]. John iii. 16. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son* [h]. Other texts declare as follows: Isa. liii 6. *God laid on him the iniquity of us all* [i]. 1 Tim. i. 15. *He came into the world to save sinners.* 1 Pet. iii. 18. *Died for the unjust* [k]. 1 Cor. xv. 1. *Christ died for our sins* [l]. 1 John v. 9. *This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life* [m]. Acts xiii. 38. *To you is preached the remission of sins.* Acts ii. 39. *The promise is to you, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call* [n]. In which Scriptures you see Christ and all his spiritual blessings are given and made over to sinners, as such, freely and absolutely: so as that every one has a good warrant to believe they are his own. And if we would give the same credit to

f D. p. 335. *g* D. p 308. *h* D. p. 305. *i* D. p. 304.
k D. p. 299. *l* D. p. 319. *m* D. p. 319. *n* D. p. 303.

God as my tenant did to me, we need not, we could not doubt, but that they are all our own [o].

"When Jonah, in pursuance of the divine command, cried, and said, *Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,*" without mentioning any by name, "*All, from the least, even unto the greatest, believed;*" appplied the threatening to themselves. When Moses, speaking of the manna, said, "*This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat,*" without mentioning any by name; the whole congregation supposed they had all and every one a good right to take and eat. So, when our Saviour says, "*My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven,*" (John vi. 32.) alluding to the manna, we may all and every one believe it is our own [p].

Paul. Your Aspasio always supposes, that all the blessings of the Gospel are granted absolutely and without any condition; so that we have nothing to do, but to believe they are all our own. Whereas, there is always a condition expressed or implied. For, according to the constant tenour of the Gospel, we must first be in Christ, by a true and living faith, before the blessings of the Gospel are ours [q]. To descend to particulars:

o D. p. 298. p D. p. 305. 307.

q All writers on this scheme maintain, that pardon, grace, and glory, are unconditionally and absolutely given, granted, and made over to all sinners of Adam's race: and this absolute grant gives each of us a good warrant to believe, "pardon, grace, and glory are mine." Reader, stop, and think one minute. If the grant is not absolute, it does not make pardon mine, nor give me a right to believe it mine. If it is absolute, it makes pardon mine before I believe it; and so I am justified before faith. "No, say they, it is not mine before I believe it mine; but if I believe it mine, it is mine." But one would think, if it is not mine before I believe, I believe a lie. My sins are pardoned before I believe, or they are not. If they are pardoned before faith, then I am not justified by faith, but before faith. If they are not, then I believe a lie. "No," says Mr. Marshal, "according to thy faith, it shall be unto thee." i. e. If "without any evidence from scripture, sense, or reason," I believe that to be true, which is not true, it shall become true. This is the heart and soul of their scheme. Keep this in constant view; suffer no ambiguous words to drown your mind; and it is easy to see, that there is not one text in the bible to their purpose. Yea, they give us an exact definition of delusion, which properly consists in this, viz. "I believe something to be true, which is not true, till in my imagination it seems true; and so I take the comfort of it, as though it were true." Whereas, in saving faith there is no truth believed, but what is plainly revealed in the Gospel; as will appear presently.

It is true, God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son. For what? To die for us. To what end? *That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* He that is united to Christ by faith, therefore, shall be saved. But those who are out of Christ have no interest in his salvation; but are under a present condemnation. Condemned already. And the wrath of God abideth on them. "Pardon is mine." No! condemned already. "God is reconciled to me." No. *The wrath of God abideth on me.* John iii. 16. 18. 36.

It is true. This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life. But this life is in his Son. Therefore he that is by faith united to Christ, hath eternal life. For he that hath the Son, hath life. But those who are out of Christ, have no interest in this eternal life. *For he that hath not the Son, hath not life.* 1 John v. 11, 12.

It is true, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. But who hath an interest in this forgiveness? Who is that blessed man that is justified? Those who are out of Christ? No. But, *by him all that believe, are justified.* Acts xiii. 38, 39.

Again, it is true, the promise is to you. And what then? Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins. Were their sins already forgiven? No. Repent and be converted that your sins may; not because they are, but that they may be *blotted out.* Acts ii. 38, 39. and iii. 19. But what was their state while impenitent? *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* Luke xiii. 3. 5.

Lastly, it is true, the whole congregation of Israel were welcome to take the manna and eat. And it is true, that all mankind are welcome to receive Christ, the true bread, and eat and live for ever. For this eating is the same as uniting to Christ, by a true and living faith. *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.* Therefore, *he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.* But what is the state of sinners out of Christ? Have they eternal lfie! No. *Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* John vi. 32. 57.

Thus the very texts you build your scheme upon, are all against you. What warrant, therefore, has a sinner out of Christ, to say, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine?" For these precious privileges are not consigned over to him in the everlasting gospel, while in such a state. Nor shall he ever have an interest in them, unless he is first united to Christ, by a true and living faith.

Ther. If the curse of the law, which is delivered in general terms, not mentioning Theron by name, belongs to Theron; why do not the promises of the Gospel, delivered also in general terms, not mentioning Theron by name, belong to Theron too[r]? The Ninevites, from the least to the greatest, made particular application to themselves.

Paul. The law curses none but those who have already broken it; and the Gospel pardons none but those who have already complied with it. Theron has already broken the law, and fallen under the curse. Let Theron comply with the Gospel, and he shall be entitled to the blessing. The curse of the law was not yours until you broke it: nor are the blessings of the Gospel yours until you comply with it. For it is written, *he that believeth not, is condemned already.* A truth which all unbelievers, from the least even unto the greatest, should, after the example of the Ninevites, make particular application of to themselves. I must, therefore, still repeat it, what warrant from the word of God have you for your faith?

Ther. Moses led the whole congregation of Israel, at the side of the Red Sea, though the greatest part of them were in a graceless state, to call God their God. (Exod. xv. 2.) And to confirm them in this belief, God himself, from Mount Sinai, and generally through all the law of Moses, says, speaking to the whole congregation, *I am the Lord thy God.* (Exod. xx. 2.) And in the days of Jeremiah, when there was scarce a good man to be found among them, (Jer. v. 1.) and the generality were devoted to idolatry, and obstinately impenitent; yet, to the whole nation God says, *Turn, O back-*

r D. p. 306.

sliding children, for I am married unto you. (Jer. iii. 14.) And he teaches them to say, *We come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God,* (ver. 22.) And invites them to look upon him as their Father. (verse 4.) And as the Jews were all circumcised at eight days old, and so brought into covenant with God, they had all thereby a good warrant to look upon God as their God, and to believe that he was their Father, and would save them. The same may be said of all baptized persons in the Christian world [s].

Paul. If this proves any thing to your purpose, it proves that all the Christless sinners in Christendom, how wicked soever, although even buried up in Popish idolatry, are, if they are baptized, all of them married to Christ, children of God, and heirs of heaven. Into what strange absurdities and inconsistencies do you run, my dear Theron!

As to circumcision, the Jews in our Saviour's day seemed to think that it entitled them to salvation. But our Saviour taught them, that notwithstanding their circumcision, they were, while unregenerate, (John iii. 3.) and antecedent to faith and union with Christ, under condemnation and wrath. (ver. 18. 36.) And St. Paul affirms, that the Jew as well as Gentile, notwithstanding their circumcision, stood guilty before God, without any title to life, antecedent to their regeneration and union with Christ by a true and living faith. (Rom. ii. 28, 29. and iii. 1, 2. 9. 19. 28. Gal. iii. 10. 29.) And the same may be said of those who are baptized.

As to the texts of Scripture you refer to, their true sense may be easily seen, if we consider God's covenant with Abraham; in which he promised to be *a God to him and to his seed,* (Gen. xvii.) And God's covenant at Mount Sinai, in which he took the whole nation to be his peculiar people. (Ex. xix.) From which he calls himself *the Lord their God:* and on account of which he is called their husband, and they are said to be married to him, and are charged with whoredom and adultery for going after other gods; and are invited to return to him, as a wife to her husband, and to call him their God and Father. Not that they had any title to

[s] M. p. 28. 182. 185. D. p. 312. 343.

pardon, grace, and glory, while *uncircumcised in heart.* (Jer. xxxi. 31, 32. Rom. ii. 28, 29.) With these observations in mind, it will be easy to understand the language used commonly in the Prophets, particularly in Hos. ii. throughout.

Ther. But it is the proper business of faith, "to appropriate and take home to ourselves the grace of God, which lies in the common indefinite grant of the Gospel." Therefore, as pardon, grace, and glory, are all of them given and granted to sinners as such; by faith, I, a sinner, take home these blessings to myself; i. e. I believe they are mine[t].

Paul. Yes. But, my Theron, there is no such absolute, unconditional grant contained in the bible. Nor do the Scriptures teach that faith is of such a nature.

Ther. Yes. But St. Paul declares that *Faith is the evidence of things not seen,* (Heb. xi. 1.) and exhibits a clear demonstration of our right to enjoy them[u].

Paul. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Rom. x. 17.) If therefore, the word of God gives a sinner, while out of Christ, no absolute unconditional right to the blessings of the Gospel, faith can see none. Faith cannot see what is not, neither can it believe without evidence. All the believers in Saint Paul's catalogue, had good evidence for what they believed. But you have no evidence from "Scripture, sense, or reason," for what you believe; as you yourself are obliged to own.

Ther. But all those figurative descriptions of faith, which occur in holy writ, imply this appropriating belief[x].

Paul. No, my dear Theron, not one of them. Is Christ viewed in the beginning of Saint John's Gospel, as the Creator of all things, who, under the Mosaic dispensation, sustained the glorious character of God and King of Israel, now come to tabernacle among men, come to his own people, as the promised Messiah? He is to be acknowledged, received, and honoured, according to his character. But he came to his own, and his own received him not; did not own him for the Messiah, nor believe in, nor honour him as such. Although he was indeed the very God and King of

t D. p. 306. 314. 317. u D. p. 318. x D. p. 320.

Israel, who of old dwelt in their tabernacle and temple in the form of God, now come to tabernacle in flesh, in the form of a servant: yet they rejected him, called him a deceiver, and crucified him for claiming to be the Son of God, and King of the Jews! But to as many as received him as the promised Messiah, with all their hearts, gave he power to become the son of God, even to as many as believed in his name. Not that believed their sins were pardoned, without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, but that believed in his name, trusted in his mediation, merits, and atonement, that through his name they might obtain forgiveness of sins, and eternal life. (John i. 1. 12.) Is Christ compared to the brazen serpent? We are not to believe that we are healed; but to look to him for healing. Is he compared to a bridegroom? We are not to believe he is our husband; but as chaste virgins to be espoused to him, that by this spiritual marriage he may become our husband. Is he compared to the city of refuge? We are not to believe ourselves safe; but to fly to him for safety. Is he compared to bread and water? We are not to believe our hunger and thirst are assuaged; but to eat the living bread, and drink the living water, that they may be so. In a word, is he the great High-priest, who has entered into heaven with the blood of atonement in his hand, by and through whom we may come to God for all things, in full assurance of acceptance in his name? We are not to believe that pardon, grace, and glory are ours; but to draw nigh to God through him, that of God's infinite grace through him, we may be pardoned, sanctified, and saved.

Ther. But David, Job, Habakkuk, Paul, the Council at Jerusalem, yea, all the saints in Scripture, use this appropriating language. They all speak the language of assurance [y].

Paul. And good reason why; for they all knew they were sincere godly men, from a consciousness to their own inherent graces. But there is not a saint to be found in the bible, that believes pardon, grace, and glory, to be his own, without any evidence from "Scripture, sense, or reason." Forgive

y D. p. 325. 327.

me, sir, if I should say, this kind of faith the bible is as great a stranger to, as to the doctrine of purgatory.

Ther. "I know no other justifying faith, but that which relates to the Gospel, and believes its report. But here, I find, lies the core and root of our controversy. This is the precise point to be settled; what it is to believe [z]."

Paul. No, no, my dear Theron, "the core and root of the controversy" lies not here. You ought to believe the report of the Gospel, and all the truths of the Gospel, with a full assurance; yea, with all the full assurance of faith. But Protestant writers, for above these hundred years, have been testifying against your kind of faith, because the thing believed is not contained in the Gospel. The Gospel makes no such report. But the thing believed is a lie. Here, my friend, here lies "the core and root of the controversy," as Mr. Marshal well knew [a]. And it is a little strange, that your Aspasio should not know it too. However, pray tell me what you mean by believing the report of the Gospel.

Ther. "The Lord declares by his prophet, *I, even I am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions.* To believe, is to subscribe this declaration: to subscribe it with our hand, and profess with our heart, *Lord, it is done, as thou hast said.*" My transgressions are blotted out [b].

Paul. But, my dear Theron, this declaration was made above two thousand years ago. Do you date your justification so far back? Or do you think the words have had any new meaning put to them by God, of late; which two thousand years ago they did not mean?

Ther. No. I appropriate and take home the blessing to myself: and so I believe the report of the Gospel.

Paul. This is not to believe what the Gospel reports; but rather to make a new Gospel. This is not to believe the truths already revealed; but to make a new revelation. That the transgressions of Theron, a Christless sinner, are blotted out, is not taught in this text, nor in any text in all the sacred volume, as you yourself very well know. And if this be what you mean by an appropriating faith, then Mr. Mar-

z D. p. 328. a M. p. 166. b D. p. 329.

shal's account of it is very just: it is a believing without any evidence, from "Scripture, sense, or reason [c]."

c The whole party maintain, with Wendelinus, that in the first direct act of faith, I believe "my sins are forgiven," and the whole party assert, that before I believed it, "my sins were not forgiven:" therefore, the whole party must concede, with Mr. Marshal, that the thing I believe, "was not true before I believed it," and, consequently, that I do believe it, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." For if it was not true, there could be no evidence of its truth: and yet the whole party pretend to ground their belief upon Scripture. So that this is the strangest scheme of religion in this respect, that ever was advanced in the Christian world. The thing I believe as true, is not true before I believe it; and yet I believe it because it is true! It is not contained in Scripture, yet I believe it because it is contained in Scripture! I know it is no part of the Gospel-revelation, yet I venture my soul upon it for eternity, as the very Gospel of Christ! Now, how do these men feel satisfied in themselves, in believing such inconsistencies? Why thus: "The Gospel makes an absolute, unconditional grant of pardon and salvation to all the sinful race of Adam: but I am a sinner of Adam's race; therefore, pardon and salvation are mine." But, then, one would think they were mine before I believed it, and whether I believed it or no. If the grant doth not make them mine, why do I believe they are mine? If the grant does make them mine, then they are mine before I believe: and so we are not justified by faith, but BEFORE faith, contrary to the whole tenour of Scripture. No, say some, "I have by grant a common, but not a saving, interest." But the thing granted is "salvation:" and the grant is absolute. Therefore, "I shall be saved." I ought to believe, that "I shall be saved." Yea, they say, I make God a liar, if I do not; but, surely, if I believe I shall be saved, I believe I have a saving interest. And so, I believe I have by the grant, what I know is not contained in the grant: and so believe, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason;" and yet I ground my belief wholly upon Scripture. They say, "The grant makes it mine, so as to give me a right to believe it mine, and claim it, and possess it as mine." But then I ought to believe it mine, precisely in the same SENSE in which the grant makes it mine. Thus, if the grant makes it mine as being a child of Adam, then I ought to believe it mine, as knowing I am a child of Adam. If the grant makes it mine only as being in Christ, then I ought to believe it mine only as knowing that I am in Christ. If the grant only makes a common interest mine, then I ought to believe a common interest only to be mine. If the grant makes a saving interest mine, then I ought to believe a saving interest mine. And what is mine by grant, if the grant is absolute, is mine before I believe it, and whether I believe it or not. No, say they, "It is not mine before I believe; and yet I must believe it mine. I have no evidence from Scripture; and yet my faith is wholly founded on Scripture. The Scripture says no such thing any where; and yet the Scripture plainly says this thing in hundreds of places. My sins are not forgiven; and yet I *make God a liar* if I do not believe they are forgiven. It is not true as yet, nor do I know it ever will be true; but I must believe it, without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason: and in so doing, I believe the report of the

Ther. But Christ has expressly promised, that *according to my faith, so shall it be to me.* Matt. ix. 29[d].

Paul. Believe ye, that I am able to do this? said Christ to the two blind men, who cried, *Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.* They said unto him, *Yea, Lord.* To be sure, they had sufficient evidence to believe it, from the miracles he had already wrought. On which our Saviour touched their eyes; saying, *According to your faith, be it unto you.* And what, my Theron, is this to your purpose, who have no evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, for what you believe? Our Saviour never told sinners, that if they would believe, pardon, grace, and glory were their's; it should be unto them according to their faith: but frequently taught, that many who believed so, would finally be disappointed. Matt. vii. 21. 27. Luke xiii. 24. 30.

Ther. Yes, our Saviour expressly said, *What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.* Mark xi. 24[e].

Paul. Our Saviour had cursed the barren fig-tree, and it was dried up from the roots. At which his disciples wondering, our Saviour told them, that whenever they were called to perform any miraculous works, and were looking up to God to do them, they must firmly believe he would do the thing, how great soever it was, even although as difficult as to *remove a mountain and cast it into the sea.* And it is plain, they had sufficient evidence, for such a belief: as they knew that God almighty stood engaged to effect the miraculous

Gospel; although the Gospel never made such a report." If I can believe all these contradictions with all my heart, I am a true believer, and shall be saved. If not, I am blind, carnal, legal; and finally must suffer the pains of eternal damnation for my unbelief. The infidels of the age, (and no wonder infidelity prevails,) stand by; hear the dispute; shake their sides. The Devil says, "So I would have it." The daughter of Zion puts on sackcloth, looks up to heaven, and cries, "Hast thou forsaken the earth, O Lord! When wilt thou return and scatter these clouds; and cause light to break out, spread, and prevail; and darkness and error to flee away! O, when shall that blessed day come, that the *knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth, as the waters cover the sea!* When shall *satan be bound, that he may deceive the nations no more!*"

d M. p. 247. *e* M. p. 174.

works, which he commissioned them to declare should be done. Mark xi. 20. 24.

Ther. But the apostle James directs all Christians, even when praying for divine wisdom and grace, to *ask in faith, nothing wavering.* James. i 6 [f].

Paul. To ask in faith : in the faith of what? Of truths revealed in the gospel, concerning the way of our access to God in the name of Christ, our great High Priest, and God's readiness to hear and answer all requests, agreeable to his will, put up unto him in his name. These truths ought to be, these truths must be, firmly believed. But in order to our going to God in full assurance of faith, there is no need, I hope, that we believe as true, things, the truth of which we have evidence of, "from Scripture, sense, or reason." Read the 2d chapter of this epistle, and you may see the apostle James was no friend to a presumptuous faith, a faith built on no evidence.

Ther. But I am invited in the most affectionate manner, to believe that Christ loves me and will save me, in 2 Cor. v. 20. *"As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.* Hark! it is the voice of infinitely condescending love, speaking by his ambassador, Sinners accept my great salvation. Enjoy what I have purchased for you by my dying agonies. Do not suspect my kindness, or refuse my gifts. This will wound me deeper than the spear which pierced my side. O the grace of our exalted King! After all this, can I entertain the least doubt, whether I have a permission to believe firmly [g]? Did the judge ever beseech a condemned criminal to accept of pardon? Does the creditor beseech a ruined debtor, to receive an acquittance in full? Yet our almighty Lord, and our eternal Judge, not only vouchsafes to offer these blessings, but invites us; entreats us; with the most tender and repeated importunity solicits us, not to reject them [h]."

Paul. In these words you are invited to be reconciled to God; and not to believe that God is reconciled to you. You may be even ravished, to think of the one, but still be so in-

f D. p. 342. *g* D. p 350. *h* D. *Edit.* 1. *vol.* 1. p. 132.

attentive to the other, as not to take any notice of it, although before you, in one of the most remarkable texts in the bible.

Ther. But we are strictly commanded by God himself, to believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, (1 John. iii. 23.) and have God's promise and oath to assure us, we shall certainly be saved, if we do [i].

Paul. True. Yet Christ has never taught us, that faith consists in believing, that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." But has given us the strongest assurance, that many who are very confident of their title to heaven, shall finally go to hell. Mat. vii. 22.

Ther. Yes, sir. Suffer me in my turn to put on the airs of assurance, and to affirm, that this is that very notion of faith, which was taught, and which was approved as genuine, by our blessed Saviour. For, "our Lord bears this testimony concerning Thomas; *Thomas, thou hast believed.* Now then, I think, we have got an infallible touchstone. Let us examine what that is, which Jesus Christ calls believing. Whatever it be, it is the determination of truth itself; and should pass for a verdict, from which there lies no appeal. And this, this is the confession of Thomas, *my* LORD and *my* GOD! This, this expresses what our divine Master calls *believing.* When, therefore, we confess with our lips, and are persuaded in our hearts, that Jesus is our Lord, who bought us with his blood; that Jesus is our God, who will exert all his adorable perfections for our good; then we truly believe. We believe in our Saviour's sense of the word; we have that faith, which he allows to be genuine [k].

Paul. Pray, my dear Theron, as your all lies at stake, your all for eternity, do take the bible and read the whole paragraph, with the heart of an honest man.

Ther. I will. Heaven forbid I should act a dishonest part in an affair of such infinite importance! John xx. 24. *But Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.* (ver. 25.) *The other disciples therefore said unto him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said unto them, "Ex-*

[i] D. p. 350. 353. [k] D p. 229. 230.

cept I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." ver. 26. *And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said,* "*Peace be unto you.*" ver. 27. *Then said he to Thomas,* "*Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.*" ver. 28. *And Thomas answered, and said unto him,* "*My Lord, and my God.*" ver. 29. *Jesus said unto him,* "*Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*"

Paul. No comment is needed. It is impossible the sense of the words can be made plainer. The thing that Thomas was so faithless about, was not his particular interest in Christ; nor was this the thing he believed, that Christ died for him in particular. But the resurrection of Christ was the thing, the only thing in question with him. Overjoyed to see him, feel him, hear him, know him, in the language of fervent love, ready to clasp him in his arms, he cries out, *My Lord, and my God!* Thus then stands the argument.—Because Thomas believed that Christ was risen from the dead, on the clearest evidence; therefore, justifying faith consists in believing that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine," without any evidence at all from "Scripture, sense, or reason." My dear Theron, was ever book abused and perverted in this apostate world, one half so much as is the holy bible!

Ther. But is it not true, with relation to every sinner, and so with relation to me, that "Christ has bought me with his blood, and will exert all his adorable perfections for my good?"

Paul. Must I again put you in mind of what your favourite author so plainly affirms? "We have no absolute promise or declaration in Scripture, that God certainly will or doth give Christ and his salvation to any one of us in particular; neither do we know it to be true already, by Scripture, sense, or reason, before we assure ourselves of it. Our assurance is not impressed by any evidence of the thing; but we must

work it out in ourselves by the assistance of the spirit of God." And that your Aspasio not only likes the book in general, but heartily approves of this passage in particular, you may be assured from the notice he has taken of it in his preface to Mr. Marshal's Mystery.

Ther. Yes, and I approve it too: for I never supposed it was any where taught in Scripture, that "Christ has bought me with his blood, and will exert all his adorable perfections for my good," and so certainly save me in particular. I know there is no such thing affirmed in Scripture. I never pretended there was. And you have misrepresented our scheme, in supposing it follows from what we affirm of the free grant of the Gospel, that we are justified, adopted, and entitled to eternal glory, before we believe. We hold no such thing. There is no such thing revealed in the oracles of truth. And indeed if there was, I should not need any special assistance of the Spirit in the work of believing. That I should be saved, would be as plain a truth as any other in the bible. And did I believe the Scriptures to be true, I could not doubt of this, any more than of any other plain truth therein contained. Whereas, you know, it is impossible for a man, although he is satisfied the bible is the word of God, merely by his own strength and reason to bring himself to believe, unless the Spirit first witnesses with his spirit, that he is a child of God. Because, before this we have no evidence of the thing from Scripture, sense, or reason. But when "the divine Spirit brings Christ and his righteousness nigh unto us, in the promise of the Gospel; clearing at the same time our right and warrant to intermeddle withal, without fear of vicious intromission;" then we can appropriate what lies in the general promise to ourselves in particular: and then we can say, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." And then we can see "our title perfectly clear [l]."

Paul. O my dear Theron! and thus at last, you give up your warrant from the written word [m]; as in fact there is no

[l] D. p. 295. 362.

[m] You give up your warrant from the written Word. By the first direct act of faith, antecedent to any reflection, I believe that "God is reconciled to me."

such thing contained in the bible; and now your recourse is to the spirit. But if, in fact, the written word gives you no warrant for this belief; if, in fact, you have no right by the bible to lay this claim, the spirit of God has nothing to do in the case. He cannot clear up a right, where there is no right to be cleared up. He cannot clear up a warrant, where there is no warrant to be cleared up. I grant it is the office of the Holy Spirit to open our understandings to understand the Scriptures, and to open our eyes to behold the wonderful things in God's law. But it is not the office of the Holy Spirit, to open our eyes to see truths in the bible which, in fact, are not there. It is not the office of the Holy Spirit to make us believe a lie; that is, believe that the bible teaches what in fact it does not teach; or to make us new revelations, no where contained in Scripture, on which to venture our souls for eternity. Nor is it the business of faith, to believe these new unscriptural revelations, but only to believe with all our hearts the truths already revealed. Or, to use your own words, "I know no other justifying faith, but that which relates to the Gospel, and believes its report." But here, sir, lies the wound of your faith, and this is "the core and root of the controversy," that the thing which you believe, is not revealed in the bible, nor is there any evidence from Scripture of the truth of it. And this you know; this you own, and yet still will persist in believing it, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." And to help yourself out, you call in the aid of the Holy Spirit, to testify to a thing unrevealed, to a lie, a known lie; to testify that something is contained in Scripture, which you know is not

(D. p. 169. 362.) If this supposed truth was contained in and taught by the written word, it was true before I believed it, as all grant: and so God was "reconciled to me" before the first act of faith. But, they say, it was not contained there, it was not true, God was not "reconciled to me" before I believed. But God's word does not warrant me to believe, as truth, any proposition, the truth of which is not taught in his word. All the truths contained in his word, I ought to believe: but I have no right to add or diminish. Deut. xii. 32. *Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.* Rev. xxii. 18. *If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.* If we add to God's word, we have no warrant from God's word to believe our additions to be *divine*. If any doubt of this, let them read 2 Thes. ii. 11.

contained there. 'That with full assurance you may say, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine; consigned over to me in the everlasting Gospel; a title perfectly clear, without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason[n]."

Oh, my dear Theron! In matters of this importance, it does not become us to soothe and flatter; but to speak the truth in uprightness. Did you profess to be an Antinomian, and openly declare, "that the elect were justified from eternity, or at least from the death of Christ; that the Holy Spirit reveals to the elect their justification in God's own time; and that justifying faith consists in believing this new revelation;" then your scheme, however inconsistent with Scripture, would seem, at least, to be consistent with itself. But now, as you state things, you are, (forgive me, my Theron,) you are, I say, neither consistent with Scripture nor with yourself. And your dressing up experimental religion in this light, (while Arminians, Pelagians, Socinians, and infidels, laugh at the delusion,) tends only to embolden self-confident hypocrites; and to leave the poor awakened sinner, that has any common honesty in his heart, in a more bewildered case than ever. Or if, by your charming and affectionate manner of address, the poor blind sinner is induced to believe you, he is in infinite danger of being led to settle on a false foundation, to his eternal ruin. For having once believed, Oh dreadful thought! having once believed, he must never doubt again. He must watch and pray, fight and strive against doubts with all his might, as the dreadful Agag, that must be pursued with fire and sword[o]. That being once deluded, it is a thousand to one, but he lives and dies in his delusion!

Ther. But does not the holy Scripture expressly speak of the *witness* and *seal of the Spirit?* Rom. viii. 16. Eph. i. 13.

Paul. Yes; it does. But never, never, as what any had before faith and justification: as is the case with you. *Ye were sealed*, says the apostle to the Ephesian saints. But when? Before they believed? No. AFTER *that ye believed, ye were sealed.* Eph. i. 13. And had they this spirit of adop-

[n] D. p. 269. 362. M. p. 178. [o] D. p. 342, 343.

tion, before they were already children? No. But, *because ye are sons*, because ye are already members of God's family, therefore, *God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* Gal. iv. 6.

So that I must needs tell you, my dear Theron, there is not one tittle in the bible to countenance your scheme: but it is all over inconsistence, falsehood, and delusion. And if your heart is no better than your head, you are in an infinitely dreadful state. What your heart is, I do not pretend to say. This does not belong to my province. But the scheme of religion you plead for, leads directly to destruction. And would that pilot be esteemed an honest man, who, for fear of giving offence, should sit silent and suffer the ship to run upon the rocks; rocks under water, which he knew would dash the ship to pieces in a moment, if not avoided.

Ther. But, is it not impossible to trust in Christ, unless first we believe that Christ and all his spiritual blessing are ours[p]?

Paul. What would you think, my dear Theron, of a Neonomian, or Arminian, to whom you were opening the way of salvation by free grace through Jesus Christ, if he should thus reply? "It is impossible to trust in Christ and free grace, unless first for our encouragement, we are conscious our lives are reformed, our sins repented of, and that we are disposed sincerely to endeavour to do our duty. Were I thus prepared, I should dare to trust in Christ, and could hope that God would accept me through him. But without these good qualifications, it is impossible I should dare to trust in Christ."

Ther. I should suppose that his own righteousness was really at the bottom of his faith, and the very thing that encouraged him to believe. And such a man does not so properly trust in Christ, as in his own righteousness. And a faith built on a false foundation, is certainly a false faith.

Paul. And pray, my Theron, what is it that encourages you to trust in Christ? Not any truths revealed in the Gospel; but something of which you have no evidence, from

[p] D. p. 312.

Scripture, sense, or reason. A firm persuasion of this emboldens you to trust in Christ: yea, is so entirely the foundation of your trust, that it appears to you impossible, without this previous persuasion, ever to trust in him. Wherefore, this persuasion is at the bottom of your trust. And, strictly speaking, you do not so properly trust in Christ, as in that persuasion. Should you now be convinced, that this persuasion was a mere delusion, your trusting in Christ would cease in a moment. Just as it is with a self-righteous person, when his eyes are open to see himself. Rom. vii. 9. *The commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

Ther. But, "would any person of the least prudence, erect his house upon a piece of ground, without a previous conviction, that the spot was his own [q]?"

Paul. Wherefore then, we must thus conclude, that all the truths, already plainly revealed in the Gospel, which are true before we believe them, and whether we believe them or not; that all these truths laid together, although clearly understood, seen in their spiritual glory, firmly believed, approved of, and liked, would not be sufficient to encourage a sinner to trust in Christ. i. e. There is nothing in the written word which, let it be ever so well understood, and ever so firmly believed, is sufficient to encourage even a regenerate sinner, (for it is plain, regeneration is before the first act of faith, John i. 12, 13.) to trust in Christ. To supply this defect, we must first believe as truth, what as yet is not true, and that without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason. And this belief, this persuasion, is to be the foundation of our trusting in Christ; so entirely the foundation, that without it, we cannot "with the least prudence," trust in him. And the weight, the whole weight of our eternal salvation, is at bottom laid, not on the Gospel, the written Gospel, but on a supposed truth, we have no evidence of, from Scripture, sense, or reason.

Oh, my dear Theron! This is a precarious foundation to venture your precious, your immortal soul upon. And should it give way and break under you, it might let you fall down

[q] D. Edit. 1. vol. 3. p. 285.

into eternal ruin. This, this is indeed, to use your Aspasio's beautiful similitude, "like placing the dome of a cathedral on the stalk of a tulip."

Meanwhile let me tell you, the inspired Apostles verily believed, that in the written word we have, not only full evidence of the truth of the gospel itself, (John xx. 31.) but also, the truth of the gospel being seen, sufficient encouragement to come to God through Christ, in full assurance of being accepted through him. (Heb. x. 19. 22.) And on this ground they preached the Gospel to the world, inviting all to return to God through Jesus Christ; without ever giving the least intimation of any need of their being previously persuaded of some things as truths, which were no where plainly contained in the Gospel.

Ther. Pray what is there contained in the Gospel which may be sufficient to encourage a sinner, to return to God through Christ, with full assurance of acceptance through him?

Paul. These three truths are set in the clearest and strongest light, in the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

1. That the goodness of God, the supreme Governor of the world, is self-moving, and infinite. It needs no external motive, no goodness in us, to draw it forth into exersise. Yea, it can surmount infinite ill-desert; self-moved. This is demonstrated in God's giving his Son, of his own mere motion, to die for a world, so ill-deserving, infinitely ill-deserving, that no atonement appeared to him sufficient to secure the honour of his law and government, but the blood of his own Son. Let me believe with all my heart, that God has done this deed, a deed infinitely superior to the creation of millions of such worlds as this, all which, with one word's speaking, Messiah could have created in a moment. I say, let me believe with all my heart, that God of his own mere motion has given his Son, one equal to himself, to die for such a world as this; and at once I have the fullest conviction of his self-moving goodness, and infinite grace. It stands in a light brighter than the sun at noon-day.

2. God can, consistently with the honour of himself, of his law and government, and sacred authority, pardon and save

those who, strictly speaking, are infinitely ill-deserving, through Jesus Christ his Son. His honour is, in every point of light, effectually secured by the mediation and death of his Son. The dignity, the infinite dignity of the Son of God, proves this to the enlightened soul. The resurrection of Christ from the dead, is a visible demonstration of it. And God himself, in plain words, declares it to be true, That he can now be *just, and yet justify him that believeth in Jesus.* (Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26.) Now, if the goodness of the divine nature is infinite and self-moving, and if he can, consistently with his own honour, pardon and save the infinitely ill-deserving through Jesus Christ his Son; the only question that remains, is, who may, among all the sons of Adam, trust in this glorious Mediator, return home to God through him, and through his merits and atonement look to the free grace of God for pardon and eternal life? But,

3. It is most expressly declared, that *whosoever will, may come,* (Rev. xxii. 17.) and *he that cometh shall in no wise be cast out.* (John. vi. 37.) Yea, orders are given that these glad tidings should be carried all round the world, *the gospel preached to every creature,* (Mark xvi. 15.) And all, even the vilest and the worst, are to be, as it were, compelled to come in, (Luke xiv. 23.) *prayed and beseeched to be reconciled to God,* (2 Cor. v. 20.) *to repent and be converted* (Acts iii. 19.) to return home to God through Jesus Christ, to God, who is as ready to be reconciled to the returning sinner, as the father of the podigal is represented to be, to his returning son. (Luke xv. 20.)

Now when the sinner's eyes, in regeneration, are opened, to behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, it will immediately appear to him the fittest and happiest thing in the world, to return home to God, and be for ever devoted to him, if he may. And a clear sight and firm belief of these plain Gospel-truths, gives him the fullest assurance that he may; that it is God's will he should; and that God stands ready to accept him through Jesus Christ, if he does[r].

[r] Except my eyes are first opened to behold the glory of God, I cannot see the ground and reason of the law, nor heartily approve it as holy, just and good.

Indeed, I readily grant, that unregenerate sinners do neither see the infinite amiableness of God, nor really believe the Gospel to be true. The *vail is on their hearts.* (2 Cor. iii. 16.) The Gospel *is hid from them.* (Mat. xi. 25.) They are *blind.* (Rom. xi. 25.) And their blindness is a vicious wicked blindness, arising from a heart void of love to God, and full of enmity against his law, and against the glorious Gospel of his Son; as was proved in our former conversation. And in this benighted state, being followed with the fears of eternal misery, they must take some way for hope and comfort. Some go about to establish their own righteousness; and on that, build their hopes for heaven. Others, finding no comfort in the way of duties, try to work up themselves to a belief, that Christ died for them in particular, that God loves them, and will save them. And if by any means, they come to feel a strong persuasion of this, it so delivers them from their fears, and so fills them with comfort and joy, that they do all they can to strengthen this persuasion. And to this end, apply

Unless the law appears good and glorious, I cannot see the wisdom of God in the death of his Son, nor cordially believe the Gospel to be true. Till I see the Gospel to be true, I am blind to the only door of hope. Merely a sight of the glory of God as a righteous lawgiver, and a sight of the glory of his holy law, can give no hope. The truth of the Gospel is seen, I then behold, (1st.) the love, the self-moving goodness of God in the gift of his Son: but not that he loves me in particular, and is reconciled to me. Secondly, I then see, that Christ has secured the honour of the divine government; and that now God can be just, and yet justify the sinner that believeth in Jesus: but not that I am one for whom he died, with an absolute design to save. Thirdly, I then see, that any sinner may return to God through Christ; and see, that those who do, will be accepted and saved: but not that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." In a word, I see the truth of what is already revealed in the Gospel; but I do not see truths not revealed there. The Holy Spirit helps me to see the truths already revealed; but reveals no new truths.—The things which I believe, were true before I believed them. If, after all, any pretend, there is no difference between these two kinds of faith, I only say, if these two kinds of faith, like two roads which seem, and but seem, to lead the same way, should, in fact, lead to two different worlds, as far asunder as heaven and hell, it is proper to set up these monuments, to warn travellers; and the nearer they are alike, the more need poor travellers have to take heed they d not mistake. But if they do, if they will mistake after warning, their blood will be upon their own heads: and they will eternally remember, that they knew, what they believed, was not revealed in Scripture. They believed without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason.

an hundred texts of Scripture, perverting them from their plain and natural meaning; and are yet obliged at last to own, that they have no evidence, on which to ground their belief, from Scripture, sense, or reason. Yea, that the thing they believe, is not true, till it becomes true by their believing it to be true. However, their consciences being quieted by this belief, they can now go on, estranged from a God of infinite glory, blind to his infinite beauties. Nor do they believe, that ever any did love God for his own infinite loveliness; although this is the very spirit of all the angels and saints in heaven, and of all good men upon earth. Isai. vi. 3. 2 Cor. iii. 18[s].

Ther. I see you are returned again to your darling topic, the doctrine of loving God for his own loveliness.

Paul. Yes; and this is the very vitals of vital piety. A sense of the beauty of the divine nature, and a firm belief of the truth of the Gospel, lay the foundation for all the rest. (John xvii. 3.) *Repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ,* a life of communion with God and devotedness to him, joy in God, and rejoicing in Jesus Christ. And while the love of God: not a belief that God loves me in particular, without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, but a clear and lively sense of the self-moving goodness and infinite grace of God, as manifested in the gift of his Son, and shining forth in the whole Gospel-way of life,

[s] To make the matter, if possible, still plainer, it may be thus stated: 1st. He that is encouraged to come to Christ from a consciousness of some good qualification in himself, secretly builds his hopes of acceptance with God on his own righteousness. 2d. He that is encouraged to come to Christ, from a belief that Christ died for him in particular, and that God is reconciled to him, builds his hopes of acceptance with God on a delusion. 3d. He that comes to Christ without a disposition to be reconciled to God, is only seeking after salvation from hell, and does not desire the salvation which the Gospel offers. 4th. He that thinks he has a disposition to be reconciled to God, but never saw the glory of God, of his law, and government, he but deceives himself. 5th. He that is encouraged to come, only by the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, as revealed in the written word, builds his hopes of acceptance on the truth. He that comes on this encouragement, with a hearty disposition to be for ever reconciled to God, and devoted to him, and thirsting for grace for ever to live to him, is a true convert. He that, after this, lives to God through all trials, proves his faith by his works, as Abraham did. Gen. xxii. 12.

as exhibited in the written word, is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; attended with a full assurance that we are the children of God, resulting from a consciousness of a filial spirit towards God; now we know and believe the love that God hath to us. And inspired with a sense of the divine glory, the beauty of God's law and government, the glory of the way of salvation by free grace through Jesus Christ, the free and sovereign grace of God in calling us into the kingdom of his Son, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And habitually, and actually, through the course of our lives, present ourselves a living sacrifice to God through Jesus Christ; to be for him, entirely for him, and that for ever. Nor do we feel any need to bring your kind of faith into the account.

You remember, my dear Theron, that parabolical picture of a true saint, of a real christian, given by our blessed Saviour, in Mat. xiii. 23. whose representations, if we do not believe, we do indeed make God a liar. *He that received seed into the good ground, is he;* not that hath a new revelation of a new truth not contained in the Gospel! but is he *that heareth the word, and*—what next? Not, is really persuaded in his heart, that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine!" without any evidence "from Scripture, sense, or reason." But, heareth the word and *understandeth it, so as in it to behold as in a glass, the glory of the Lord. Which also*—what? Complains that his graces are no more to be seen "than the stars at noon?" No, what then? *Which also beareth fruit.* How much? So little that no eye can see it! Or at most, but just discern it, "as a glow-worm in the night!" And that in so unsteady, uncertain a manner, that for his life he cannot tell whether there be any fruit or no; but rather the more he looks, the more "his doubts are increased [t]?" No, no, far from this: *and bringeth forth some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty.* Yes, my Theron, that is good ground indeed, which yields an hundred bushels of grain, for one that was sown; or sixty, or even thirty. And thus, *the grain of mustard seed, becom-*

[t] D. p. 361, 362.

eth a great tree. (ver. 31, 32.) And thus, *the leaven* spreads *till the whole is leavened.* (ver. 33.) And this is the idea, the grand and noble idea, our blessed Saviour had of a true Christian! It is granted, there is a great difference in the degrees of fruitfulness in true converts, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. But those who bring forth no good fruit, whatever ravishing joys they may sometimes have had, (ver. 20.) are by our blessed Saviour pictured by the similitude of—*stony ground—thorny ground.*

Ther. But I have an unanswerable objection against this account of the nature of justifying faith. For, whereas in the holy Scriptures it is represented to be an exceeding difficult thing to believe; according to you, there is no difficulty at all in it, when once the sinner, in your sense of things, is regenerate, and believes the gospel to be true with all his heart.

Paul. Right, my dear Theron. The difficulty is now over. For he is not obliged to believe "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." The way in which he is to return to God, all lies open, plain before him. And it appears to him the fittest and happiest thing in the world, to return home to God through Jesus Christ. And he does it with all his heart [u].

Ther. Wherein then consists the difficulty of believing?

Paul. The difficulty in the way of embracing the Gospel in a saving manner, according to the New Testament,

u Return home to God. By this phrase Paulinus means exactly the same with those words in Jer. iv. 1. *If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me.* And in Ezek. xxxiii. 11. *Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die!* And in Acts iii. 19. *Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* From being enemies, repent, and turn, and *be reconciled to God.* 2 Cor. v. 20. It is worthy to be observed, that, according to Saint Peter, repentance is before forgiveness. *Repent, and be converted, that your sins* MAY *be blotted out.* And this is the doctrine God has taught in all ages of the world. By Moses, Lev. xxvi. 40. By David, Ps. xxxii. 5. By Isaiah, Is. lv. 7. By John Baptist, Mark i. 4. By Christ, Matt. v. 4. Luke xiii. 3. By all the apostles on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 37, 38, 39. and indeed all over the Scripture. But there is nothing of the nature of repentance before forgiveness in Theron's scheme. Yea, his repentance professedly arises wholly from a belief that his sins are forgiven: so that he is forgiven before he begins to repent.

arises from a worldly spirit, a self-righteous spirit, and being dead in sin.

1. From a worldly spirit. Men are generally so attached to wordly things, riches, honour, and pleasure, that, although they might be glad to know they should go to heaven, when they die, yet they have no heart to become the disciples of Christ; to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him; and take God for the alone portion of their souls. Therefore, when they are invited to come to this feast, (and a feast indeed it is, to a regenerate sinner, whose eyes are opened to see things as they are,) they desire to be *excused.* Luke xiv. 18. And they *make light of it, and go their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize.* Matt. xxii. 5.

2. From a *self-righteous spirit.* Rom. ix. 31, 32, 33. For if a sinner is so terrified with the fears of eternal damnation, that he can take no comfort in worldly enjoyments; and so is quite prepared to hear Aspasio urge him to believe, that God loves him, and Christ died for him; yet there now remains the chief difficulty in the way of true faith, unremoved, viz. to yield the point, that the law not only does in fact, require sinless perfection, on pain of eternal damnation, and that he is under the curse of this law, but that this law is holy, just, and good; and so he justly condemned, and in fact, in the hands, and at the disposal of a sovereign God. This, this, a proud, self-righteous spirit is diametrically opposite unto. And to be brought to this, is killing work. Rom. vii. 9. *The commandment came, sin revived, and I died.*

3. From being spiritually dead: For when the law has thoroughly done its work, and the sinner sees and feels the truth, that he is dead in sin, justly condemned, absolutely helpless and undone in himself, in the hands of a sovereign God, who *hath mercy on whom he will have mercy;* there now needs the same mighty power whereby Christ was raised from the dead, to quicken this dead sinner. And it must wholly proceed from the mere free sovereign grace of God. (Eph. i. 19. 20, compared with Eph. ii. 1. 8.) That regeneration does thus precede the first act of faith, is plain from John i. 12, 13. where concerning all true believers, it is said, *which were born;* that is, antecedent to the first act of faith;

which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. See also John iii. 3. 5.

But these three difficulties being removed, and sinners made *willing in the day of his power,* (Psal. cx. 3.) all is easy. Sinners now *come flying* to Christ, as naturally *as doves to their windows.* (Isai. lx. 8.) For God appears to be infinitely glorious, and the gospel to be divinely true.

And here, by the way, my dear Theron, it is worthy of your diligent attention, that it is a common thing in the New Testament, to promise salvation to those, who believe the truth of the Gospel with all their hearts, and to speak of such as true saints: because where this is, every thing else will follow of course. In this view, you may at your leisure read the following Scriptures. Matt. xvi. 16, 17. Mar. xvi. 15, 16. John. vi. 68, 69. and xvii. 3. 8. and xx. 30, 31. Act. viii. 37. Rom. x. 9. 1 Cor. xii. 3. 1 John iv. 15. and v. 1. 5. Some of which are sadly perverted by some writers; particularly, Rom. x. 9 [x].

Ther. The clock strikes nine; it is time for me to retire. However, before I go, pray point out, in brief, the chief differences between what you call true faith, and the faith I have been pleading for, that I may have them to consider at my leisure. For I design more thoroughly to look into this matter, than ever yet I have done.

Paul. Among the many differences which might be mentioned, I will only point these twelve.

1. Regeneration is necessarily previous to the first act of true faith. But your faith may exist in an unregenerate heart.

2. True faith supposes the law and Gospel are rightly understood and beheld in their glory: the law approved with all the heart, as holy, just, and good; the Gospel believed, and complied with, with all the heart. But your faith is consistent with a reigning enmity against both law and Gospel.

3. True faith is an holy act. But your's has nothing of the nature of holiness in it; arises from no higher principle than self-love.

[x] D. p. 291. *Marrow of Mod. Div. Notes,* p. 155, 156.

4. In true faith, nothing is believed but what is plainly revealed in the holy Scriptures. But in your faith, the main things believed are no where contained in the bible. "Pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine."

5. In true faith, the things believed were as true before they were believed as after; being all contained in the Scriptures of truth. But in your faith, the things believed were not true before they were believed; not being contained in the bible.

6. True faith is founded wholly on that revelation which is made in the written word. But your faith, having no support from Scripture, sense, or reason, is founded wholly in a heated imagination; or, which is no better, on a new revelation, not contained in the written word; i. e. one is founded on good evidence, the other not.

7. The great difficulty in the way of true faith arises from the wickedness of the heart. But the great difficulty in the way of your faith is, that there is no evidence of the truth of the thing believed from Scripture, sense, or reason: but rather, a man is obliged to go contrary to them all.

8. True faith is wrought in the heart by the holy Spirit in regeneration, imparting divine life to the dead soul; opening the eyes to behold divine truths in their glory and reality. In consequence of which, the Gospel is understood, believed, and embraced with all the heart. But your faith is wrought by your being made, by some means or other, to believe some things as true, that are not revealed in Scripture.

9. In true faith, the way of salvation by free grace through Jesus Christ, being understood and believed, is heartily approved of, and acquiesced in, as being glorious for God and safe for the sinner. And our entire dependance for acceptance with God, is on the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, as exhibited in the written word. Whereas, your faith does not properly consist in dependance, but in confidence.—Not in looking to the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, that you may be pardoned, sanctified, and saved; not in flying for refuge, and laying hold on this hope set before you; but in being confident, that "pardon is mine,

grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." In being "really persuaded in my heart that Christ is mine, and that I shall have life and salvation by him," without any evidence "from Scripture, sense, or reason[y]."

10. True faith is always attended with love to God, arising from a sense of his own infinite amiableness, as its inseparable concomitant. Your faith is sometimes followed with a seeming love to God, arising merely from believing that he loves you.

11. But the most remarkable difference of all, is, that true faith actually unites the man to Jesus Christ, as the *branch is united to the vine.* (John xv. 5.) In consequence of which, every true believer, actually receives the spirit of Christ to *dwell in him*[z]. Rom. viii. 9. Eph. i. 13. Gal. iii. 2. 14. 1 John iv. 13. & ii. 27. Rom. viii. 14. Gal. v. 18. In consequence of this, a certain foundation is laid, to bring *forth fruit* unto God (Rom vii. 4.) in every instance (Mat. xiii. 23.) And *the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* (Prov. iv. 18.) *If he falleth, he riseth up again.* (Prov. xxiv. 16.) *Every branch that beareth fruit*, GOD *purgeth* it, and so *it bringeth forth more fruit.* (John xv. 2.) Whence, near or quite all the

y I grant, that writers on that side of the question, speak much of trusting in Christ, and resting upon him, &c. Yet according to them, previous to this trust, and that which encourages to it, is a belief that "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." And so I believe that my sins are pardoned before I begin to trust in Christ. I do not come to Christ, but rather stand off and keep at a distance, till I see he is mine, and can call God, my God. So that, strictly speaking, I am justified, and know that I am justified, before I dare come to Christ, and trust in him. Thus the matter is stated, in D. p. 312.

z Although it is plain from Scripture, that regeneration is before the first act of saving faith, (John. i. 12, 13.) and that faith is wrought by the influences of the Holy Spirit, (Eph. i. 19.) yet it is equally plain, that the gift of the Holy Spirit, to dwell in us, as an abiding principle of divine life, is after we are united to Christ by faith. (Eph. i. 13. Gal. iii. 14.) After union to Christ we have a covenant right to the Holy Spirit, (Gal. iii. 29.) may have divine grace at any time, for asking, (Luke xi. 13.) But before union with Christ, we have no right; God is at absolute liberty; we lie at his sovereign mercy, (Rom. ix. 15. 18.) And accordingly, regenerating grace is the effect of his sovereign good pleasure, (Matth. xi. 25, 26.) No promises of saving grace are made to the prayers or doings of sinners out of Christ. (Gal. iii. 10. 2 Cor. i. 20. John iii. 18. 36.)

Saints we read of in scripture, usually speak the language of assurance, as being conscious to this divine habitual change wrought in them by God's holy spirit. But thus it is not with your kind of faith. Nor is assurance this way to be obtained on your scheme.

12. As a natural consequence of the whole, the several systems of experimental religion, resulting from these two kinds of faith, however in appearance they may be alike, yet in reality, are essentially different throughout. While the true believer is striving to grow in grace, the false pretender is striving to maintain his delusion.

Ther. I thank you, sir, for present instructions; and with your leave I will return to-morrow evening; as I want to hear your thoughts on one subject more.

Paul. The evening shall be at your service, God willing.

So ended the second conversation, and I retired again to my closet? with what views of my spiritual state, you may easily guess. Oh, my dear Aspasio! What! Are we all wrong! Or have I misunderstood your scheme! I hope, I wish, no poor sinner on earth was ever so deluded as I have been. The Lord have mercy on me! O, my dear Aspasio, that you had been present, and heard all that passed! But, alas, the wide ocean keeps us three thousand miles apart! However, with you, even now with you, is the distressed heart of

Your disconsolate,

THERON.

DIALOGUE III.

Wednesday Evening, December 13, 1758.

ACCORDING to appointment, I made my third visit. The subject proposed was the doctrine of ASSURANCE. We soon entered upon it; and this is the sum of what passed:

Ther. May the people of God, in this life, attain to a certain assurance, that they are in a state of favour with God, and entitled to eternal glory?

Paul. As there is a specific difference between true grace and all counterfeits; as true grace in the heart is naturally discernible, like all our other inward biasses; as the Saints in Scripture usually speak the language of assurance; as Saints in all ages are exhorted to seek assurance, (2 Pet. i. 10.) and as there are many rules laid down in Scripture to determine in this case, and many promises made for the encouragement of Saints, the designed advantage of which cannot be enjoyed without assurance; so, for these and other reasons, I believe, that assurance is attainable in this life, in all ordinary cases at least.

Ther. How, and by what means, may the children of God attain assurance?

Paul. Sanctification, taking the word in a large and comprehensive sense, is the evidence, the only Scripture-evidence, of a good estate.

Ther. What do you mean by sanctification, in this large and comprehensive sense?

Paul. It is usual for divines to distinguish between regeneration and conversion; between first conversion and progressive sanctification; between divine views and holy affections; between grace in the heart and an holy life and conversation; but I mean to comprehend all under one general name. You may call it the image of God, or holiness of heart and life, or a real conformity to the divine law, and a genuine

compliance with the Gospel of Christ. I have already let you see what I apprehend to be the nature of Law and Gospel, of love to God and faith in Christ. When I say this is the only evidence, I mean that this is the only thing wherein saints and sinners in every instance differ. One has the image of God, the other has not. Or, to express myself in the language of inspiration, (John xvii. 3.) *This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent.* And, (1 John ii. 3, 4, 5.) *Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected. Hereby know we that we are in him.*

Ther. What is the best method a true saint can take, to maintain a constant assurance of his good estate?

Paul. To live in the exercise of all christian graces, in his own heart every day, and to be constantly influenced and governed by them in all his external conduct in the world: *Growing in grace,* and *pressing forward to perfection.* 2 Pet. i. 5. 11.

Ther. But is it possible, that all true saints should live so?

Paul. Why not?—For, they are all delivered from the power of sin, (Rom. vi. 2. 14.) are married to Christ, in whom all fulness dwells, (Rom. vii. 4.) have already every principle of grace in their hearts, (John i. 15.) and the spirit of God actually dwelling in them, (Rom. viii. 9.) and constantly influencing them, to such a degree, that they do not, they even cannot, feel and live as others do, (1 John iii. 9.) [a] yea,

a 1 John iii. 9. Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. He doth not, and he cannot, at any time: for his seed always remaineth in him: so that these words teach us, that there is at all times a real difference between a saint and a sinner.

It is true, there is no particular bias or inclination, whether natural or gracious, in the heart of man, but may be counteracted. But to counteract the habitual bias of the heart, is quite different from acting agreeably to the habitual bias of the heart. The saint counteracts the habitual bias of his heart, when he sins. The sinner acts agreeable to the habitual bias of his whole heart, when he sins. So a saint never sins with all his heart, as the wicked man does. He can-

actually carrying on the work of sanctification. (John xv. 2.) The God of all grace ready, meanwhile, to grant all further needful help, as ready as ever a kind parent was to give bread to a hungry child. (Matth. vii. 7. 11.) So that they are completely furnished to live daily in the exercise of every grace. (Eph. ii. 10.) Yea, this is expected of them, as they would act up to their proper character. (Eph. iv. 1.) Yea, I will venture to add, having so good an authority as the Son of God, that, though there are different degrees of grace and fruitfulness among true saints, yet it is their common character to *bring forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty.* (Matt. viii. 23.) So that it seems more difficult to reconcile it with Scripture, that a true saint, (there being no extraordinary bodily disease, as the hypochondria, &c. nor other extraordinary circumstances, that may account for it,) should live along in the dark, full of doubts and fears about his state, from year to year; I say, more difficult to reconcile this with Scripture, than it is to prove that they may live so, as to make their calling and election sure, according to that exhortation in 2 Pet. i. 5. 11.

Ther. But I have known some, esteemed true converts, who after their conversion, have lain dead, without any sensible divine influence, for months together.

Paul. Why did not you add, and years together? For once I knew of one, counted an eminent Christian, who declared he lay dead twelve years, without one act of grace all that time. But what good do such conversions do? If men

not, because his seed remains in him; because he is born of God. The spirit lusteth against the flesh; so that he cannot. Gal. v. 17.

Therefore, good men, when they fall, are restless till they come to repentance; as was the case with David. Ps. xxxii. 3, 4, 5. For they are out of their element; *all is vanity and vexation of spirit;* as was the case with Solomon. Ec. i. 2. As when Haman led Mordecai through the street of Shushan, on the king's horse, dressed in the royal apparel, and proclaimed his honours in the ears of the people, he acted exceeding contrary to the habitual bias of his heart. Esth. vi. So did Peter when he denied his master; and, therefore, at one look of Christ, he went out and *wept bitterly.* So that these instances, though often alleged, are not to the purpose of stony-ground hearers: for they have no root in themselves. They *receive the word with joy, endure for a while, and fall away.* Matt. xiii. 20, 21. See Mr. Edwards on Religious Affections, p. 274. 277

are as much under the power of spiritual death after their conversions, as before, what benefit is there in being converted? And what becomes of all those Scriptures, which declare, *He shall save his people from their sins.* Matt. i. 21. *That we might serve him, without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives.* Luke i. 43. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh: and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.* Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* Tit. ii. 14. And pray take notice, my dear Theron, that, as God gave the law written on tables of stone, to Israel, to all *Israel according to the flesh,* which covenant, (Deut. ix. 9. 15.) they did break (Heb. viii. 9.) so he has expressly promised to all the *spiritual Israel,* i. e. to all true believers (Gal. iii. 29.) that he will *write his law in their hearts;* i. e. give them an inward temper of mind answerable to his written law. Heb. viii. 10. A hypocrite may go to God and say, "pardon is mine, grace is mine," and be ravished with his own delusion: but God doth, in fact, write his law in the heart of every true believer. This is God's mark, put upon all that are of his flock; whereby his sheep are distinguished from the rest of the world.

Ther. But cannot a man, who is very uncertain of his sanctification, be sure of eternal life some other way?

Paul. Our Saviour having described the christian temper and life, in his sermon on the Mount, concludes with the strongest assurances, that such, and such only, as are truly sanctified, shall be finally saved. If we are such, our *house is built upon a rock;* if not, our *house is built upon the sand.* Now, my dear Theron, we hope to go to heaven when we die. So do many, who will be finally disappointed. How shall you and I know, that our foundation is good? Who can tell us? Surely none better than he who is to be our judge. Could we ask our blessed Saviour, LORD, how shall we know? What would he say? Thanks be to God, we

know what he would say, as surely as though he should answer us with an audible voice from heaven. For he is now of the same mind, as when he dwelt on earth. What he then taught, is left on record, plain for all to read, that none might mistake in a point of such infinite importance.

Take your bible, my dear Theron, read our Saviour's sermon on the Mount; and there you will see the character of a true christian, drawn by an infallible hand; and find a test, by which you may safely try your state. The true christian is *humble, penitent, meek, longing after holiness, merciful, pure in heart, a peace-maker, willing to part with all for Christ, and to go through the greatest sufferings in his cause.* Mat. v. 1. 12. Like *salt*, he is full of life and spirit. Like *light*, by his knowledge and example, he enlightens all around him, and is an *honour* to his master, (ver. 13. 16.) lives by a *stricter rule* than any *hypocrite:* (ver. 20.) does not justify nor indulge the *least grudge* against his neighbour, or the *first stirrings of any corruption* in his heart, (ver. 21. 42.) *loves* not only his friends, but *his enemies*, even *his worst enemies*, (ver. 43. 48.) *gives alms* and *prays*, as in the *sight of God*, (chap. vi. 1, 5.) is *chiefly concerned* for the *honour* of God, and *kingdom* and *interest* of Christ in the world, (ver. 9, 10.) chooses God for his *portion*, lays up his treasure in heaven, and means with a honest heart, with a *single eye*, only to be God's servant; and *trusting* his kind providence for temporal supplies, he makes it his chief business to be truly religious. Ver. 19. 34. Not of a carping, captious, censorious disposition; but chiefly attentive to, and mostly concerned to amend his own faults. Chap. vii. 1. 5. He prays, and his prayers are answered. Ver. 7. 11. And in imitation of the divine goodness, he is kind to all around him, *doing as he would be done by.* Ver. 12. At his conversion he enters in at this *strait gate* of strict piety, and through the course of his life, he travels in this *narrow way* of holiness, almost alone, few suited with that road, many walking in *broader ways.* Ver. 13, 14. Nor will he be diverted from these sentiments and ways, by any preachers or writers, whatever appearances of holiness and devotion they may put on. Ver. 15.

Ther. But do you really and verily believe, that none will at last be admitted into heaven, but those who are of this character?

Paul. Pray, my dear Theron, read our Saviour's answer to your question, and believe it. Believe that he means as he says.

Ther. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father, which is in heaven. Ver. 21.

Paul. Observe, that DOTH, not that DID some years ago; but that DOTH, through the course of his life. Forgive this interruption. Pray read on.

Ther. Many will say to me, in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? Ver. 22.

Paul. You see they are in confident expectation of eternal life. But what is their doom?

Ther. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell, and great was the fall of it. Ver. 23. 27.

Paul. Observe, my dear Theron, our Saviour does not say, every one who firmly believeth that he shall be saved, however unconscious of sanctifying operations in his own breast, shall, as sure as God is true, be for ever happy. No: but just the reverse. He says, that however confident men be of salvation, yet if they do not the things contained in his sermon, their hopes shall infallibly be disappointed. Now say, my dear Theron, do you believe this doctrine, taught by our blessed Saviour?

Ther. I must own, I have not been wont to view things just in this light. "I used to think, I need not trouble myself, to find out a multitude of marks and signs of true grace, if I could find a few good ones. Particularly, I thought I might know I was passed from death to life, if I loved the brethren [b]."

Paul. Your few good ones are all counterfeits, if alone, separate from other good ones. For the true saint receives every grace from Christ. John i. 16. Nor did Christ mean to single out a few in his sermon, but to give a brief summary of the whole Christian life. And *he that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them*, not, doth a few of them, but doth them one and all. Read through the first epistle of John, and you will see this sentiment confirmed. Where there is one grace, there is all. If there is not all, there is none [c].

Ther. But, sir, suffer me to tell you, that "this method of seeking peace and assurance, I fear, will perplex the simple minded; and cherish, rather than suppress, the fluctuations of doubt. For, let the signs be what you please, a love of the brethren, or a love of all righteousness, a change of heart, or an alteration of life; these good qualifications are sometimes like the stars at noon-day, not easily, if at all, discernible; or else they are like a glow-worm in the night, glimmering, rather than shining: consequently, will yield at the best, but a feeble, at the worst, a very precarious evidence. If in such a manner, we should acquire some little assurance, how soon may it be unsettled by the incursions of daily temptations, or destroyed by the insurrection of remaining sin! At such a juncture, how will it keep its standing! How

b M. p. 291, 292.

c However, on the Arminian and Antinomian schemes of religion, in which nothing is truly harmonious and consistent, what they call graces, may, some particulars of them, be found alone; yet on St. Paul's scheme this can never happen. For every grace natively results from those divine views, which lay the foundation of any one grace. *Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord*, as shining forth in the law, and in the Gospel, *we are changed into the same image*, i. e. into a real conformity to the law, and a genuine compliance with the Gospel, comprising all the branches of religion. See Mr. Edwards on Religious Affections, p. 249. 261.

retain its being! It will fare like a tottering wall, before a tempest; or be *as the rush without mire, and the flag without water.* Job viii. 11.

"Instead therefore of poring on our own hearts, to discover, by inherent qualities, our interest in Christ, I should rather renew my application to the free and faithful promise of the Lord; assert and maintain my title on this unalterable ground: Pardon is mine, I would say, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine. Why? Because I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast. Rather, because God hath spoken in his holiness; because all these precious privileges are consigned over to me in the everlasting Gospel, with a clearness unquestionable as the truth, with a certainty inviolable as the oath of God [d]."

Paul. But did you not use to think, that faith was productive of good works? Yea, did not your Aspasio teach you this doctrine?

Ther. I must confess he did. This was once the language of my Aspasio to me, while I was yet an unbeliever. To give me an exalted idea of faith, thus he taught me. "Faith will make every power of our souls spring forward to glorify our heavenly Father; glorify him by every instance of obedience, fidelity, and zeal [e]. It makes all the powers of our souls like the chariots of Amminadab, ready, expedite, and active in duty [f]. This is the love of God, that we walk after his commandments. This is the natural fruit; this the certain evidence of love to that glorious, transcendent, and adorable Being. It buildeth up the fair fabric of universal godliness [g]." It "will diffuse itself through every intellectual faculty, and extend to every species of duty, till the whole heart is filled with the image, and the whole behaviour regulated by the law of the blessed God [h]." It "will induce us to present all the members of our bodies, and all the faculties of our souls, as a living sacrifice to the honour of God, to be employed in his service and resigned to his will." To "be as pilgrims below, and have our conversation above. Such, my dear Theron," said he to me, "will be the effects of faith [i]. Nothing is

d D. p. 361, 362. *e* D. p. 169. *f* D. p. 176.
g D. p 177. *h* D. p. 179. *i* D. p. 181.

more certain than that faith is a vital, an operative, a victorious principle[k]. When the first converts believed, the change of their behaviour was so remarkable, the holiness of their lives so exemplary, that they won the favour, and commanded the respect of all the people. Acts ii. 47. In short, it is as impossible for the sun to be in his meridian sphere, and not to dissipate darkness, or diffuse light, as for faith to exist in the soul, and not exalt the temper, and meliorate the conduct[l]." All which, besides proving it by many texts of Scripture, he illustrated at large, in the example of Saint Paul and Abraham[m], and concluded with assuring me, that faith "will give life to every religious duty[n];" and make us "abound in the work of the Lord[o]." Yea, at another time he taught me, "that faith, even when weak, is productive of good works[p]." Which are "the proof," and do "undeniably attest its sincerity[q]." They are "the grand characteristic, which distinguishes the sterling from the counterfeit[r]. They will distinguish the true believer from the hypocritical professor, even at the great tribunal[s]. And at another time, I remember, my Aspasio said, "Do we *love our enemies; bless them that curse us; do good to them that hate us; pray for them which despitefully use us, and persecute us?* Without this loving and lovely disposition, *we abide*, says the Apostle, *in death*; are destitute of spiritual, and have no title to eternal life[t]."

Paul. "No title to eternal life!" How dare you then go to God and say, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine!"

Ther. This is that very faith which my Aspasio taught me to exercise; and which he assured me, would be "as a torch in a sheaf[u]," in kindling every grace into a sudden flame.

Paul. But why then does not every grace flame out? Why is not your heart like the chariots of Amminadab? And your title to heaven clear, "from a consciousness of sanctifying operations in your own breast:" If your faith is "a vital, an

k D. p. 182. *l* D. 182, 183. *m* D. p. 187. 203.
n D. p. 206. *o* D. p. 207. *p* Vol. 1. Edit. 1. p. 251.
q Vol. 1. Edit. 1. p. 252. *r* Vol. 1. Edit. 1. p. 259.
s Vol. 1. Edit. 1. p. 278. *t* Vol. 2. Edit. 2. p. 303.
u D. p. 356.

operative, a victorious principle," why cannot you obtain a full assurance from that "grand characteristic, which distinguishes the sterling from the counterfeit," in this world; and which "will distinguish the true believer from the hypocritical professor, even at the great tribunal." And without which, you are in fact "destitute of spiritual, and have no title to eternal life?"

Ther. Once I had this evidence, as I thought, clear in my favour. But, by experience, I found at length, that no steady lasting assurance could be had this way. For my graces were mostly "as the stars at noon, quite invisible; or at best, as a glow-worm in the night," but just to be seen. So that the "little assurance" I had, was very unsteady. Yea, looking for marks of grace, I found "rather increased my doubts;" as I could not but discern more evidences against me, than for me. Therefore I gave up this way, as tending to perpetual uncertainty. And as a more direct way to assurance and peace, I learnt to live by faith; to go to God, and say, "pardon is mine," &c.

Paul. And all, my dear Theron, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." Yea, in direct opposition to your own Aspasio, who affirms, that faith is "a vital, operative, victorious principle." Pray, how do you know, that your faith is sterling, and not counterfeit? Be quite impartial, and say, is it not to be feared, that your faith is what St. James calls a *dead faith?*

Ther. But the time once was, when I was full of light, love, and joy.

Paul. Yes. Like a "torch in a sheaf," all in a flame of love, to think your sins were pardoned. But you see, that this sort of love, like the Israelites' joy at the side of the Red sea, does not last long. But, like the stony-ground, it endures for a while, and then comes to nothing. And your graces are now no more to be seen, than "the stars at noon." And you must give up your assurance, or take another course to support it, and another course, indeed, you take, to live by faith? "Without any evidence," as Mr. Marshal owns, whose book your Aspasio values next to the bible, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." And is this

that glorious faith your Aspasio once so highly extolled! Is all come to this at last!

Ther. Yes. And did not Abraham thus live by faith, who *against hope believed in hope.* Rom. iv. 18. And was not this the way of saints in general under the Old Testament? When *they walked in darkness and saw no light,* they *trusted in the Lord, and stayed themselves on their God.* Isai. l. 10. And was not this the way of saints in the apostolic age? *They walked by faith, and not by sight.* 2 Cor. v. 7. David checked himself for doubting. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* Ps. xlii. And Asaph looked upon it as his sin. Ps. lxxvii. 10. *I said, this is my infirmity.* And Christ often upbraided his disciples for their unbelief. And St. Paul charges the Hebrew converts not to *cast away their confidence.* Heb. x. 25.

Paul. Pray, my dear Theron, take your bible, and read the several texts you refer to; read what goes before, and what follows after; and you may easily see, not one of them is to your purpose. God had promised to give Abraham a son, although his wife was not only barren, but also by reason of age, past child-bearing: and notwithstanding the difficulties in the way of its accomplishment, Abraham believed the divine promise. God had by the mouth of Samuel promised to give David the kingdom of Israel; but he was banished from his country, and from God's sanctuary: his enemies taunted; yea, and his life was in continual danger. So that he was ready sometimes to say, *I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul.* But then again he checked himself for giving way to such unreasonable discouragement; after the express promise of God to him. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul!* However, through all the Psalm he appears conscious to the exercise of grace in his heart, and discovers not the least doubt of the goodness of his state. See Ps. xlii. So the captives in Babylon had an express promise, that after seventy years they should return to Zion. But such an event, situate as they were, seemed incredible. Every thing looked dark. They had no light. They saw no way for their return. But God had promised it; and therefore they, (who feared the Lord, and obeyed his voice, i. e. who were "conscious of

sanctifying operations in their own breasts,") for their encouragement, are exhorted to cast their burden upon their God, and put an implicit faith in his wisdom, power, and veracity; and trust in him to accomplish his word. (Read from Isai. xlix. 13. to Isai. l. 10.) So Asaph knew he was a sincere godly man; as is evident from the seventy-third Psalm, throughout. But he was so overwhelmed with a view of the calamitous state of God's church and people, (see Psal. lxxii. 20. and read the eleven Psalms following, entitled Psalms of Asaph,) that sometimes, (like those in Isai. xlix. 14.) he was ready to sink under discouragement, as though God had quite cast off his church and people for ever. For which he checketh himself, and endeavours to raise his hopes, from a remembrance of God's wonderful works to Israel of old, in bringing them out of Egypt. Psal. lxxvii. So the Christian Hebrews knew the sincerity of their hearts, and the goodness of their state, by the fruits of holiness. Heb. vi. 9, 10, 11. And the confidence, that St. Paul exhorts them to hold fast, was their confidence of the truth of Christianity; for the profession of which, they had already suffered much, and were likely to suffer more: and yet if they drew back, and renounced Christianity, it would cost them their souls. Heb. x. 23, 39. And though it is true, our Saviour upbraided his disciples for not believing he was risen from the dead, of which they had sufficient evidence, &c. yet neither they, nor any other person, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelation, were ever blamed for doubting their title to eternal life, while their evidences were not clear.

Yea, our Saviour was so far from encouraging his followers to this blind faith, this bold presumption, that his whole Sermon on the Mount is directly levelled against it. None are pronounced blessed, but those who are endowed with holy and divine qualifications of heart, and lead answerable lives. And though men were endowed with the miraculous gifts of the holy spirit, and *prophesied in Christ's name, and in his name cast out devils, and did many wonderful works*, and made a great profession, and had high confidence, crying *Lord, Lord*; as our Saviour foresaw many would: yet if they were not under the real government of that divine tem-

per, described in that sermon throughout, our Saviour affirms, that at the day of judgment he would bid them depart. Mat. vii. 21. 27. To go on, therefore, after all this; confident we shall have eternal life, though unconscious of sanctifying operations in our own breasts, is, forgive me, Theron, is, I say, little better than downright infidelity. Yea, did we believe our Saviour to be an impostor, we might with less difficulty expect to get to heaven, in such a way. For as sure as he was a messenger sent from God, so sure shall we find the doctrine contained in his sermon on the Mount verified at that great day, when he shall come to judge the world. Wherefore, *be not deceived*, O my Theron! *God will not be mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap.* Gal. vi. 7.

To refer to those words of St. Paul. (2 Cor. v. 7.) *We walk by faith, and not by sight*, as you do, and to imagine, that St. Paul, and the primitive Christians lived at such a low, blind, presumptuous rate, casts infinite reproach upon Christianity. For they all, with unveiled faces, *beheld as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and were changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.* 2 Cor. iii. 18. And divine and eternal things all lay open, as it were to the Apostle's view. He looked at them; he saw them; he believed them. A sense of their infinite importance penetrated his heart. He was clean carried above all the goods and ills of this present world; and like the sun in the firmament, he kept on a steady course, till he had finished his race, and obtained a crown of righteousness. And thus HE *lived by faith.* 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18. 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8. Yea, it was an avowed principle, in the apostolic age, to judge of the goodness of their state, by the holiness of their hearts and lives. 1 John iii. 6. *Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not. Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.* Ver. 7. *Let no man deceive you.* Ver. 8. *He that committeth sin, is of the devil.* Ver. 9. *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin.* Ver. 10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.* This was the Apostolic criterion; and therefore if any pretended to conversion, if any pretended to be acquainted with Christ, who lived not according to our Saviour's instructions, particu-

larly in his sermon on the Mount, this was his doom; he was branded for a liar. 1 John ii. 4. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

Ther. I grant, the saints in Scripture usually speak the language of assurance; but I always thought, "we had no cause to judge, that this assurance was grounded on the certainty of their own good qualifications[x]."

Paul. Was not Abraham certain of his sincerity, when out of love and obedience to God, he left his father's house and native country; and at one word speaking, felt a heart prepared to offer up his beloved Isaac? Was not Moses certain of his sincerity, when out of love to the cause of God, he despised all the treasures of Egypt; and afterwards felt he had rather die; had rather have his name blotted out of the book of the living, than that God should not effectually take care of the honour of his own great name? Was not Job certain of his sincerity, when with such calmness he said, *the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; and blessed be the the name of the Lord?* Yea, did not he constantly assert his sincerity through all his trials? Job xxxi. 1. 40. *O, how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day,* says David. Psalm cxix. 97. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth I desire besides thee,* says Asaph. Psalm lxxiii. 25. *I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart,* says Hezekiah, looking death in the face. Isai. xxxviii. 3. *Thou knowest that I love thee,* says Peter. John xxi. 17. *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world,* says Paul. 2 Cor. 1. 12. But why do I mention particulars? For this, even this, is the way in which all Scriptural saints attained assurance. 1 John ii. 3. *Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* And had you lived in the Apostolic age, O my Theron, I doubt not, all good people would have been ready, on hearing such talk as you have been too much carried away with, to cry out—*But know, thou vain man, that faith without works is dead.* Jam. ii. 20.

[x] M. p. 184.

Ther. "If, in such a manner, we should acquire some little assurance, how soon may it be unsettled by the incursions of temptation, or destroyed by the insurrection of remaining sin! At such a juncture, how will it keep its standing! How retain its being! It will fare like a tottering wall before the tempest; or be *as the rush without mire, and the flag without water.* Job viii. 11 [y]."

Paul. It is true, when the storm arises, the house that is built upon the sand, will be "like a tottering wall before the tempest." And "*as the rush without mire, and the flag without water,*" *so the hypocrite's hope shall perish.* Job viii. 11. 13. But in true saints, their faith is "a victorious principle." *For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world. And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.* 1 John v. 3. Nor shall any ever be admitted to *eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God,* but *he that overcometh.* This is the message which Christ, since his exaltation in heaven, has sent to his church on earth. Rev. ii. 7. 11. 17. 26. & iii. 5. 12. 21. & xxi. 7. And therefore, *blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.* Rev. xxii. 14.

Ther. But are there not some, who are but *babes in Christ?*

Paul. Yes. And *as new born babes,* they *desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby,* (1 Pet. ii. 2.) and as they grow up *unto a perfect man,* (Eph. iv. 13.) their assurance increases in exact proportion. 2 Pet. i. 5. 10.

Ther. This doctrine of your's, "I fear," will wound weak Christians, and "perplex the simple minded [z]."

Paul. This doctrine, so plainly taught by Jesus Christ, and by all his apostles, were it once thoroughly understood, and firmly believed, would not only "wound" and "perplex" presumptuous hypocrites; but even slay its thousands, yea, its ten thousands; while the righteous would flourish like the green bay-tree, nourished up by such sound and good doctrine. For never did assurance, true and genuine assurance, so abound among professors, as in the apostolic age, when

y D. p. 362. z D. p. 361.

this was the doctrine universally in vogue. And then the holy lives of their converts were so "exemplary, that they won the favour, and commanded the respect of all the people." And Christianity, thus adorned by the constant behaviour of its professors, gained ground every where, in spite of all the efforts of earth and hell. Whereas, in the days of Luther, in the days of Cromwell, and in our day, when your kind of assurance has been so much in vogue, the lives of many professors have been such as to bring reproach upon Christianity, in the sight of the world. It was this that prejudiced the Papists against the reformation in Luther's time. It was this that prejudiced England against experimental religion in Cromwell's time. And it is this, it is this, O my Theron, that has brought vital piety into such general contempt in New England, in these late years. Our opposers cried, "Let us wait, and see how these converts will turn out a few years hence." They waited; and are confirmed in their infidelity. And thousands seem to be gone off to the Arminian scheme, or worse. Could I speak, O my Theron, with a voice like that of the Arch-angel, when he shall wake up all the sleeping dead, I would sound an alarm to all God's people through the Christian world, warn them against this delusion, and invite them to retrun back to the old apostolic doctrine.

Ther. But, dear sir, it is not possible for me to maintain assurance in this way. To suppose that my inherent graces, which are so difficult to be discerned, at best, and so unsteady and precarious, are a proper foundation on which to build a fixed assurance, is a doctrine quite romantic. Yea, you may as well "place the dome of a cathedral on the stalk of a tulip [a]." But on the other hand, by the witness of the spirit, in contradistinction from inherent graces, a firm and unshaken assurance of our eternal salvation may be obtained [b].

Paul. A firm and solid rock is this foundation; as he declares, who is the Son of God, and our final judge. No, say you, it is rather like "the stalk of a tulip!" On what evidence then will you venture your immortal soul, for a whole eterni-

a D. p. 361. *b* M. p. 184. 188.

ty? On the witness of the spirit? But, O my dear Theron, what good will this witness of the spirit do you, when you come to die? When the storm rises, when the rain descends, the flood comes, and the wind beats upon your house, it will fall; "like a tottering wall before the tempest," if not founded on that very rock, pointed out by our blessed Saviour. Ten thousand witnesses, from ten thousand spirits, will stand you in no stead. For as true as that Jesus was the Messiah, the man that *heareth his sayings and doth them not*, shall at last hear that dreadful word, *Depart, depart, I know you not; I know you not, ye workers of iniquity.* Then you will find that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* Heb. xii. 14.—And then you will see that saying, now to you so incredible, made the test of admission into heaven—*No man can be Christ's disciple, unless he love him more than father and mother, wife and children, houses and lands, yea, more than his own life.* Mat x. 37, 38. Luke xiv. 25. 33. You may come to the *door* and *knock*, and cry, *Lord, Lord, open to me*; and tell him you firmly believed in your heart, you should have eternal life. But if you are found a worker of iniquity, he will bid you depart. You may cry for mercy; but your cries will be for ever in vain. That spirit, O my Theron, which would make you believe your state to be good, when according to Scripture it is bad, is not the holy spirit, by which the Scriptures were inspired; nor is its testimony to be credited.

Ther. But if I must try the witness of the spirit, by the sincerity of my graces, the testimony of the spirit will stand me in no stead [c]."

Paul. If you trust to the testimony of the spirit, without any regard to the sincerity of your graces, you have nothing but a spirit, a naked spirit, to depend upon. And if your spirit should prove to be satan transformed into an Angel of light, you are deluded; your soul is lost; for ever lost.

Ther. But If we must first know by our inherent graces, that we are the children of God, this would render the witness of the sipirit needless.

c M. p. 183.

Paul. Unless we first know that we have these inherent graces, we can never be assured of our good estate, according to our Saviour's sermon on the Mount. Pray mind this, my dear Theron.

Ther. Then you deny the immediate witness of the spirit, I suppose.

Paul. This immediate witness of the spirit, which you plead for, is certainly contrary to Scripture. For it will tell a man his state is good, when, according to God's word, it is bad. And which is directly to the case in hand, it leads men to build their assurance, not on that rock our Saviour points out as the only safe foundation, but on something entirely different. And I am sorry to say it, tempts men to compare what our Saviour calls a rock, to the stalk of a tulip. This spirit, therefore, being contrary to Scripture, is not the spirit of God, but the spirit of delusion.

Ther. What then can the witness of the spirit be?

Paul. The design of a witness is, to prove a point, to make it evident and certain; that we may believe it without the least doubt. And the proof must be legal proof, or it will not pass in law. Now, the point to be proved, is, that I am a child of God, a true disciple of Christ; and so entitled to eternal life. For, none but the children of God and true disciples of Christ, are entitled to heaven, according to the word of God. Which is the only rule whereby all are finally to be judged. But Christ affirms, that *no man can be his disciple, unless he love him more than father or mother, wife or children, houses or lands, yea, more than his own life.* And assures us in the most plain and express manner, that all who expect to go to heaven, not having such hearts and lives as he describes in his sermon, shall certainly be disappointed. If, therefore, the spirit of God means to make it evident to me, that I am a child of God, a disciple of Christ, and so an heir of heaven, it will be, it must be, by a proof that will stand in law, a proof the bible allows to be good. Otherwise, no credit is to be given to it: unless we will set aside this infallible law-book, by which all the christian world is to be judged. If the proof will not pass with our final judge,

it ought not to pass with us now. But no proof will pass with our final judge, but what quadrates with the forementioned declarations of our Saviour. For he will not recede from his own words. Therefore, there is but this one way to prove to my conscience, that I am a child of God, a disciple of Christ, and so an heir of glory; there is but one thing that can possibly convince me; namely, for the spirit of God to give me such an heart as the children of God, and true disciples of Christ have, according to the plain declarations of the Gospel. By this I may know; and by nothing short of this. If this evidence is doubtful, no other can, no other should satisfy me. If this is plain, no other is necessary in order to a full assurance. Therefore, then, the *spirit of God witnesseth with my spirit that I am a child of God,* when by a large communication of divine grace, this is made plain beyond all doubt. I feel the heart of a child towards God; a heart full of love, reverence, trust, obedience; a heart to go to him as a child to a father; or in other words, the spirit of adoption, whereby I cry, *Abba, Father.* And by this I know I am a child of God. And *if a child, then an heir, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ.* Rom. viii. 16. 17. compared with verse 1. 5, 6. 9. 12, 13, 14. All true believers had *this seal of the spirit* in the Apostolic age. Eph. i. 13. And for aught that you or I know, all true believers have had it in all succeeding ages ever since. It is certain they have in some degree. And it is certain, no full assurance can be had that is genuine and good, unless they have it in such a degree, as to be plain beyond all dispute.

Ther. I used to think the spirit helped us immediately, not by the evidences of internal graces, but immediately, without any medium, without any evidence, to see our interest in the love of God, as held forth in the absolute unconditional grant of the Gospel. So that one might say, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine; not because I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own breast, but because all these blessings are absolutely made over to me in the everlasting Gospel." This deed of conveyance, thus seen by the help of the spirit, was the grand demonstration of my right to pardon and

salvation. And now, *believing the love that God hath unto us, we love him because he first loved us.* And so our love to God, and other graces, are a kind of secondary evidence; without any regard to which, we may, yea, previous to which we must, have assurance by the direct act of faith. For it is this assurance alone, which enkindles our love and all our graces [d].

Paul. But it has been already proved, that these blessings are not made over to us, as sinners, absolutely and unconditionally; but only to those who are in Christ by a true and living faith. Yours, my dear Theron, forgive me this freedom, yours is a false gospel; a false spirit; a false faith; a false love; all is false. Built at bottom, on no evidence "from Scripture, sense, or reason."

Ther. But amidst all this error and and delusion, how shall we know the truth!

Paul. By making the written word our rule, our only rule. Once the question was, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, *art thou he that should come? Or, look we for another? Go and shew* John, said our blessed Saviour, *those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, and the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them.* Matt. xi. 3, 4, 5. These were the characters of the Messiah, according to the sacred writings of the Old Testament; and to these he appeals. Now the question is concerning Theron, is he a true believer, a real convert, a Christian, that our Lord will own at the day of judgment? Well, go read, say I, our Saviour's sermon on the Mount. *Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that mourn; the meek,* &c. &c. to the end. And see; Is my Theron a man of this character? If so, his house is built upon a rock. If not, it is built upon the sand. If the holy Spirit has wrought so great a miracle as to make you such a man, this is what the devil cannot do. This is such a witness of the spirit, as will pass at the great tribunal: and you will need no other. But without this, ten thousand revelations will avail you nothing. Nay, but that will be your

[d] D. p. 358, 359, 360, 361, 362. M. p. 184. 188.

certain doom, *I know you not, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.*

Had one appeared, and claimed to be the Messiah, without performing those mighty works our Saviour did; would any have been obliged to give credit to his testimony? No, surely. And does a spirit come, and testify that my Theron is a child of God, without performing the mighty work of sanctification? Is Theron obliged to give credit to its witness? By no means. If the holy spirit *takes away the heart of stone, and gives you an heart of flesh; writes God's law in your heart, and puts truth in your inward part, so that you walk in his statutes and keep his commandments;* the work is done. You are a true convert. You will be saved. But without this, all is nothing.

Ther. But have not many good men had this immediate witness and testimony of the spirit I am pleading for?

Paul. How can you know, my dear Theron, that ever there was a good man, since the foundation of the world, who had this witness? We have no instance in Scripture, nor does the word of God lead us ever to look for such a thing.

Ther. How can I know? Strange question! When some of the best men in the world have held to the immediate witness.

Paul. If we do certainly know our good estate by our sanctification; is not the immediate witness needless? If men do not certainly know they are good men, by their sanctification; who on earth can tell, but that they are hypocrites? And so, but that their immediate witness comes from the devil? If they cannot tell; to be sure, you and I cannot. Nor will their immediate witness prove the contrary; unless you can demonstrate, that satan never transforms himself into an angel of light. Besides, men may "hold to the immediate witness" that never had it, through some mistake. And if men have assurance by their sanctification, it is not very likely that God should make them an immediate revelation, merely to clear up a point already clear: i. e. work a kind of miracle, when there is no need of it? Besides, my dear Theron, how will you know whether your immediate revelation comes

from God, or from the devil? Will you know by the fruits? No. For this is to "try the witness of the spirit by the sincerity of your graces." And then, as you say, "the testimony of the spirit will stand you in no stead," will be of no service. Will you know without any respect to the fruits? But how? Leave holiness out of the account, and what is there of this kind, but what the devil can do? If he can, how do you know but he will? How do you know but he does? Go to the Anabaptists in Germany, in Luther's time; go to the enthusiasts in England, in Cromwell's time, and see what the devil has done in former ages. Yea, I could name towns and persons in New-England, where and in whom satan's mighty works have been to be seen, within less than twenty years ago. All the country knows, that some who appeared to have the highest confidence of a title to heaven, have sufficiently proved to the world, that they were deluded by their immoral lives since. Will you, after all, say that it is a sin to doubt? And that you ought to be strong in faith, and give glory to God? Yet you must remember that it is all, "without any evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason." And this you know! And this you own!

Who, my dear Theron; who that hath a soul to save, would, with his eyes open, dare to venture his ALL for ETERNITY, on such a foundation as this! But, which is still more surprising, who among all rational creatures, can look upon that foundation, which Christ himself calls a rock, but as the stalk of a tulip, compared with this[e]!

O, my dear Theron, you will excuse me this freedom, this kind and well-meant freedom. A minister of Christ ought not to flatter. Nor is it your interest to be soothed. The plain naked honest truth is what we all need to know. See with your own eyes. Judge for your own self. For your own precious immortal soul lies at stake.

As to the three questions you proposed, you have now my opinion, and the sum is this: The true convert having, in regeneration, had is eyes open to behold the glory of God and

e The reader may see this subject, viz. The Witness of the Spirit, thoroughly discussed in Mr. Edwards on Religious Affections.

Jesus Christ, the glory of the law and of the Gospel, he approves of the law as holy, just, and good; he believes the Gospel to be from God, acquiesces in that way of life, trusts in Christ, the great Mediator, returns home to God through him, to be for ever the Lord's: and being united to Christ by faith, he receives the holy Spirit to dwell in him for ever. In consequence of which, he brings forth fruit; growing in grace, and persevering therein, through all changes and trials to the end of his life. And so an assurance of a title to eternal life is in such sort attainable by believers, in all ordinary cases, that it must be owing to their fault, if they do not enjoy it. However, no honest man ought to believe his state to be good with more confidence than in exact proportion to his evidence. Nor is there any evidence, that will pass with our final judge, or that ought to be of any weight with us, but real holiness. A communication of divine grace in a large and very sensible degree, is that whereby the spirit of God makes it evident to our consciences beyond all doubt, that we are the children of God; and not by an immediate revelation.

Ther. But what do you think of the case of backsliders? May not they be in the dark about their state. And what ought they to do?

Paul. They may be in the dark, and full of doubts and fears; nor can they ever find rest to their souls, until they remember from whence they have fallen, repent, and return home to God through Jesus Christ. As their departing from God is the source of all their wo; so their case admits of no remedy but to repent and return to God through Jesus Christ again. It would do a backslider no good, to go to God and say, "pardon is mine, grace is mine, Christ and all his spiritual blessings are mine." For his religion does not grow up from this belief; but from *beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.* But I have not time to enter upon this subject. I recommend to you Mr. Shepherd, on the parable of the ten virgins; in which, if some expressions are not so accurate, yet on the whole, it is one of the best books I know of, for saints under backslidings. It is so useful a book, that I wish there was one of them in every Christian family.

Here, my dear Aspasio, the conversation stopped. I sat silent. I was self-condemned. Eternity all opened to my view. "I am a lost creature; heaven pity my case!" The tears rolled from my eyes; I could conceal my case no longer; I was persuaded Paulinus had a tender compassionate heart; therefore, I addressed him in the following manner.

Ther. Indeed, sir, I need not hear you upon the case of a backsliding Saint. I have heard enough already; I am convinced I was never right. I thought so before I came to see you: and all you have said has confirmed me in this opinion. I have acted the part of a disputant; but I have done it only for light, to see what answers you would make to what might be said. Alas! I have all to begin anew! just every step I have taken is wrong. My first manifestation of the love of Christ and pardon of my sins was wrong; the thing revealed for the truth was a lie. My first act of faith was wrong: the thing believed for truth was a lie. My love and joy, and all my religion, was wrong; only the result of self-love and delusion. My living by faith was wrong: It was only quieting my conscience, by holding fast my delusion.—My aversion to sanctification's being the only evidence of a good estate, was wrong. I could not stand trial by that test; and yet nothing else will pass at the great tribunal, with my final judge. But I could have no comfort this way. It tended only to doubts and fears. And doubts and fears tended to destroy all my religion. All my religion was founded in delusion; nor was there any way for it to subsist, but to hold fast delusion, and refuse to let it go. I have been doing so now for a long time, and had continued to do so to my dying day, had not some of those texts of Scripture you have so often referred to, given me a shock. And last week I had such awful apprehensions of the dreadfulness of eternal damnation, the amazing dreadfulness of going into eternity self-deceived, as penetrated my very heart. This induced me to make you these visits. And now you see my case; my dreadful case! O, dear Paulinus, be you my friend, my spiritual guide! What shall I do?

Paul. How much are poor lost sinners in this benighted world to be pitied! Generally their days, their precious

days, are spent away secure in sin! If at any time they are a little awakened to see their danger, how apt are they to take any way for comfort but the right! Mat. vii. 13, 14. We are actually in so ruined a state, that unless God interposes, of his mere sovereign grace, and by the influences of his blessed spirit guides us, we shall wander from the narrow road, get lost, and perish! Mat. xi. 25. We are enemies to God, blind to his beauty, disinclined to a reconciliation, averse to real holiness: and any kind of false religion suits such depraved hearts better than the true. Really, to love God for his own infinite amiableness, to choose him for our portion, to look upon sin as an infinite evil, to esteem the law as holy, just, and good, which requires sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation, and to place all our dependence on free grace through Jesus Christ, are, of all things, most contrary to our corrupt biasses. Our native disinclination to the right way, renders us apt to take the wrong: and having once took it obstinately, to persist in it[b]. Happy for you, my dear Theron, that you are brought so far to see your error!

And for your future conduct, take these hints.——

1. Beware you return not to that flesh-pleasing, presumptuous way of living, which had well nigh proved your ruin.—Your friends may invite you back; your love of ease and present comfort, will second all their arguments, and give them ten-fold more weight than they really have. Know it, O my Theron, there is a long eternity before you. It is worth your while to *strive to enter in at the strait gate*; yea, to *take the kingdom of heaven by violence* [c]. Therefore, count no self-denial, no pains, no endeavours too great; but *do with thy might, what thy hand findeth to do.*

b Jonah ii. 8. *They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy*, i. e. go contrary to their own interest. How often have these words been applied by some writers to persuade Christless sinners to believe, that all the blessings of the Gospel are their own! When rather they stand as a warning to all not to *observe lying vanities*, lest they *forsake their own mercy*, and go contrary to their own eternal interest. Nothing being more contrary to the interest of a poor sinner, than to believe delusion, and settle down on a false foundation.

c Mr. Edwards' Sermons on pressing into the kingdom, and on the justice of God in the damnation of sinners, are proper for such as Theron.

2. It is absolutely necessary, that you see your need of Christ, in order to come to him. Coming to Christ, in its own nature, supposes, that we see no need of him. You cannot see what you need Christ for, unless you see your true character and state according to law. The law is the appointed school-master, to lead sinners to Christ. The law requires perfect obedience, on pain of eternal damnation. It requires us to love God with all our heart, as being infinitely lovely. The least defect merits eternal wo. If you take measure by this law, as your rule, your true character will appear *dead in sin*; at *enmity against God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.* And if you judge of your state according to this law, you are *condemned already,* and the *wrath of God abideth on you,* you are lost; you stand guilty before God. And if the law is holy, just, and good, your mouth is stopped. The Lord is *righteous when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth,* although you should perish for ever. All this you must see; yea, you must feel it through and through your heart, as did the Apostle Paul. *The commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* It is for want of thorough conviction, that so many awakened sinners take up with false comfort. Their wound was never searched to the bottom. It was skinned over too soon. And such slighty cures, though more easily performed, may prove fatal in the end. But let your legal convictions be ever so deep, you will perish, unless of his mere sovereign grace.——

3. *He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in your heart, to give you the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* You are blind, quite blind, to the divine beauty. And consequently blind to the beauty of the divine law. And so, consequently, blind too to the beauty of Christ, as dying to answer the demands of the law. And consequently under the power of unbelief. Every unregenerate man has the spirit of infidelity in his heart. 1 John v. 1. Rom. x. 9. Psalm xiv. 1. You can never cordially believe that the Son of God became incarnate, and died to answer the demands of a law, in its own nature too severe. Such a substitution cannot appear to be of God,

glorious and divine; but rather shocking! You can never heartily approve of the law, (which requires us to love God for his own divine excellencies, with all our hearts, on pain of eternal damnation for the least defect,) as holy, just, and good, unless God appears in your eyes as ONE INFINITELY LOVELY.—So depraved are you, so entirely devoid of a relish for divine beauty, that God never will appear thus amiable in your eyes, unless you are born of the spirit, have divine life immediately communicated to you from God, have a supernatural and divine sense, taste, relish, imparted to you from on high. Your heart is like the chaos; the earth was *without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.* And dark, eternally dark, it would have been, had not God said, *let there be light.* So, unless *he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shines in your heart,* you will abide in eternal darkness, blind to divine beauty; to the glories of God and Christ, of law and Gospel. And if the Gospel continues thus hid from you, you are lost, for ever lost. 2 Cor. iv. 3. 6.

If the divine law, in itself, is not holy, just, and good, Christ's dying to answer its demands cannot make it so.—If the law was too severe, Christ's death was a most shocking affair! A dislike of the divine law, as too rigorous, is the root of all the chief errors in the Christian world; yea, it is the root of the prevailing infidelity of the present age. And it now lies at the bottom of all your hard thoughts of God, O my Theron; which the devil is not the author of, as some imagine, in such cases; and is a mighty bar to your believing in Christ. And nothing can effectually remove it, but divine light, imparted in regeneration [d].

d No man can understandingly and heartily look to, trust in, or depend upon, the mediation of Christ, unless he sees his need of him as a mediator. No man can see his need of the mediation of Christ, unless he sees that which renders his mediation needful. Now, the goodness and excellency of the divine law which we have broke, is the only thing which originally rendered the mediation of Christ needful. But for this, the sinner might have been saved without a mediator, without an atonement, as well as with. Nay, better. For if the law were too severe, it had evidently been more honourable for God to have repealed or abated it, than to have appointed his Son to answer its demands in our stead.

Some seem to think, that the law, although suited to the strength of man be-

4. Bid a final adieu to vain and carnal companions, to all sinful and carnal pleasures and pastimes, and to every known sin; all which tend to stupify the heart. And by reading, meditation, and prayer, endeavour with all your might to obtain a realizing sense of your true character and state. Cast yourself at the foot of sovereign grace, and cry with the blind man, *Lord, that I might receive my sight!* "That I may see

fore the fall, and so a good law for an innocent, holy creature, yet is too rigorous for a fallen world. And therefore imagine, that Christ died to purchase an abatement, and to bring it down to a level with our present weakness. But if the law was too severe, the justice of the divine nature would have moved the governor of the world to have made all proper abatements; nor was the death of Christ needful in the case. Surely Christ need not die, merely to get justice done us.

Some seem to look upon God the Father, as all made up of wrath, the sinner's enemy: and on God the Son, as all made up of love, the sinner's friend; and imagine he died to assuage his father's anger, and move his compassions towards poor sinners: and so they love Christ, while they hate God and his law. But this is all a mere chimera. The Father is as full of love and goodness as the Son. The Son is as holy and just, as great a friend to the law, and as great an enemy to sin, as the Father. They are both of one heart. Yea, they are both one God. John x. 30.

Some seem to resolve the whole of God's law and government, and the death of Christ, into the mere arbitrary will of God: as though the whole were not the result of wisdom, of infinite wisdom, but rather of mere arbitrary will. But it does not appear by Scripture, or otherwise, that the infinitely wise God ever determines any thing without reason, or does any thing but what is wise for him to do. But rather the whole of divine revelation joins to confirm the truth of St. Paul's observation, that *God worketh all things after the* COUNSEL *of his own will.* Eph. i. 11. All his perfections, if I may so speak, sit in council: and all his decrees and works are the result of infinite holiness, justice, and goodness, directed by infinite wisdom.

There is but one way to solve the difficulty; there is but one thing can ever satisfy our hearts. A sight of the glory of the God of glory, will open to view the grounds and reasons of the law, and convince us that it is holy, just, and good, glorious, and amiable, and worthy to be kept in credit, to be magnified and made honourable, by the obedience and death of the Son of God. But, then, if the law is good, we who have broke it, are not fit to live. Death is our due. The Judge of all the earth cannot but do right. His nature, law, and honour, call aloud for our destruction. He cannot be just, if he does not destroy us. It will bring everlasting reproach upon his government, to spare us, considered merely as in ourselves. When this is felt in our hearts, then, and not till then, shall we feel our need of Christ, and be prepared to look to the *free grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ*, and to exercise *faith in his blood, who was set forth to be a propitiation, to declare God's righteousness, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.*

and know what I am, what I deserve, what I need; and the only way to obtain relief, by free grace through Jesus Christ." However, that you may not trust in your own doings to recommend you to the divine favour, nor be encouraged from your own goodness to hope for mercy, constantly remember,

5. That the divine law, which you are under, requires that you love God for himself; whereas, all you do is merely from self-love. Yea, it requires you to love God with all your heart; whereas, there is no love to God in your heart. And it requires this sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation, for the least defect; so that by the law you are already condemned. By mere law you are therefore absolutely and for ever undone. You stand guilty before God. But mere law is the rule of right, and standard of justice. If justice should take place, you then see your doom. There is no hope from this quarter. Wherefore you lie at the mercy of God, his mere mercy, who is absolutely unobliged to grant you any relief for any thing you can do. He might justly have left all mankind in this state, without a Saviour. And he may, on the same grounds, as justly leave you in this state, without a Sanctifier. He did not give his Son to save this lost world, for our righteousness' sake: Yea, had we been righteous, we should not have needed his Son to die in our stead. Nor does God give his holy Spirit, to convert any poor perishing sinner, for his righteousness' sake: Yea, it is his being entirely destitute of all that is spiritually good, and dead in sin, that occasions his standing in perishing need of converting grace. And although all the promises of God are in Christ Jesus, *Yea, and in him amen*; yet, as to those who are out of Christ, they are so far from being entitled to the promises, that *the wrath of God abideth on them.* Therefore,

6. If ever you are *renewed by the Holy Ghost*, it will be, not for any goodness in you, but merely from God's self-moving mercy, and sovereign grace, through Jesus Christ. Tit. iii. 5, 6.

7. How dreadful soever this representation makes your case appear; yet, if this is your true state, you must see it, that you may know your need of Christ and free grace, and be in a capacity, understandingly, to give a proper reception to the

glad tidings of the Gospel, viz. That through Christ, God is ready to be reconciled to the returning penitent, who justifies God, approves his law, quits all claims, and looks only to free grace, through Jesus Christ, for salvation. Luk. xviii. 13. Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26.

8. Saving faith consists in looking to free grace, through Jesus Christ, for salvation; thus viewing God's law, and your own case, as they really be. And he that thus *believeth, shall be saved.* Therefore, *repent and be converted, and your sins shall be blotted out. Behold, now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation!* And by me, one of Christ's ministers, *God does beseech you to be reconciled, and I pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God.* For God hath made his only begotten Son to be a sacrifice for sin, that all who are united to him by a true and living faith, might return to God with acceptance, and be justified, and have eternal life through him.

Ther. Every word you have spoken sinks down into my ears. The Lord grant, the truth may pierce my heart through and through. The rest of my days I will devote to the business of my soul.—I thank you for your kind instructions; I beg your prayers; the anguish of my heart calls me to retire; Adieu! dear sir, Adieu!

Paul. May the only wise God be your effectual instructor, my Theron! Adieu!

To my dear Aspasio,

These Dialogues are presented by

YOUR AFFECTIONATE

THERON.

LETTER II.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

New-England, March 12, 1759.

DEAR ASPASIO,

MY melancholy letter of December last, with a copy of the substance of the conversation I had with Paulinus, at three several times, you have doubtless received long ago, as it is now three months since I wrote. If you have been impatient at hearing nothing from your friend for so long a time, I more: tossed to and fro, for months together, like a feeble ship at sea, in a tempestuous night, ready every moment to sink.

At first, (I mean after I had left Paulinus, and retired, as I had determined to spend much time in meditation and prayer,) I called in question a maxim, he seemed to take for granted; that "we are all, by nature, under a law, requiring perfect obedience, on pain of eternal damnation:" Which he so insisted was a glorious law, holy, just, and good. Thus I thought with myself; "Perfect obedience! That is more than we can yield. And am I for ever lost for the first offence? How can that be just! Can the kind Father of the universe require more of his creature, MAN, than he can do? And then punish him with eternal damnation, for not doing! Can this be right?" Indeed I now felt I had an Arminian heart.

But on a certain evening, as I was reading Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans and Galatians, in which he affirms, that *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;* that the very Heathen themselves *are without excuse;* that *the whole world stand guilty before God, and every mouth stopped;* that the law *curseth every man who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them;* and that Christ was made *a curse for us, to redeem us from the curse* of that very law; I was

greatly shocked and confounded. One while I said, this law cannot be right." But again, I said, " why then was it not repealed? Why did the Son of God bear its curse, and die to answer its demands?" I looked through the Old Testament, I looked through the New; and this notion of the law I saw was so inwrought into both, that it must be granted; or the whole of divine Revelation given up. I felt the heart of an infidel; I was full of doubts and scruples as to the truth of the bible. And when I reflected on the external evidence of divine Revelation, as represented by our late writers, particularly by Doctor Leland, whose view of Deistical writers I had lately read, I was drove even to Atheism. For if there is a God, the bible must be true. But if the bible is true, the law in all its rigour is holy, just, and good.

Thus I was unsettled in all my principles, and set afloat as on a boisterous ocean, like a ship without a compass or an helm; in great anxiety and deep perplexity, ready many times to conclude to go back, at all adventures, to my old hope, as the only way for rest: thinking, I had as good live and die on a false hope, as live and die in despair.

Till on a certain time, I began thus to reason in my heart— " whence all these doubts, O my soul! Whence all these Arminian, Socinian, deistical, atheistical thoughts! Whence have they all arisen! From viewing the law of God, as *requiring perfect obedience, on pain of eternal damnation.* But why? Had I rather turn an Infidel, than approve the law as holy, just, and good? Is this my heart! Once I thought I loved God, and loved his law, and loved the Gospel. Where am I now!" Those words of the Apostle seemed to picture my very case—*The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.* Rom. viii. 7. This text engaged my attention, and fixed my thoughts. And looking into my heart, more and more, I found the spirit of an enemy to God and to his law, in full possession of my soul.

Till now I had entertained, at least sometimes, a secret hope, that my state was good; although it seemed as if I had quite given it up. But now I began in a new manner to see, or rather to feel, I was dead in sin.

A realizing sense of God, as the infinitely great being, the

almighty Governor of the world, holy and just, a sin-revenging God, a consuming fire against the workers of iniquity, daily grew upon my heart, and set home the law in all its rigour. A fresh view of all my evil ways from my youth up, continually preyed upon my spirits. ETERNITY! ETERNITY! Oh, how dreadful it seemed! I watched, I prayed, I fasted. I spared no pains to obtain an humble, broken, contrite heart. But notwithstanding my greatest efforts, my heart grew worse; my case more desperate: till in the issue, I found myself absolutely without strength; dead in sin; lost; condemned by law; self-condemned; my mouth stopped; guilty before God: I was forced to be silent; as it was but fair and right, that God should be an enemy to me, who was an enemy to him; and but just, if he should for ever cast me off. And in this case I had perished, had not mere sovereign grace interposed. But in the midst of this midnight-darkness, when all hope seemed to be gone, at a moment when I least expected relief, (for, *the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,*) even now, *God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined in my heart.* Thus was the case.

It was in the evening, (after the day had been spent in fasting and prayer,) as I was walking in a neighbouring grove, my thoughts fixed with the utmost attention on God, as a consuming fire against his obstinate enemies; on the law, as cursing the man that continueth not in all things written therein to do them; on my whole life, as one continued series of rebellion; on my heart, as not only dead to God, and to all good, but full of enmity against the divine law and government, and (shocking to remember!) full of enmity against God himself. Feeling that my whole heart was thus dead in sin, and contrary to God, I felt it was a gone case with me. There was no hope; no, not the least, from any good in me, or ever to be expected from me. I lay at God's mercy, forfeited; justly condemned, lost, helpless, undone! And *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,* I clearly saw, was the fixed resolution of the Almighty. Thus stood my case; a poor, wretched, sinful, guilty creature, completely ruined in myself! I retired to the most remote part of the grove; where, hid

under the darkness of the evening, and the shade of spreading trees, no eye could see me. First, I smote on my breast; but could not look up to heaven, nor speak one word. I fell on my knees. But I could not speak. I fell prostrate on the ground; and felt as one ready to sink into eternal ruin; having no hope, unless from the sovereign good pleasure of my angry Judge. As I lay prostrate on the ground, a new scene gradually opened to my view. It was new, and it was exceeding glorious! GOD appeared not only infinitely great, and infinitely holy, as the SOVEREIGN of the whole UNIVERSE; but also infinitely glorious: even so glorious as to be worthy of all the love and honour which his law requires. The law appeared holy, just, and good. I could not but approve it, from my very heart: and said within myself, ere I was aware, "Let all heaven for ever love and adore the infinitely glorious MAJESTY, although I receive my just desert, and perish for ever!" Next came into view the whole Gospel-way of life, by free grace through Jesus Christ; the wisdom, glory, and beauty of which, cannot be expressed. The law did bear the divine image, and was glorious; but the Gospel exhibited all the divine perfections in a still brighter manner, and far exceeded in glory. I saw God might, consistently with his honour, in this way, receive the returning sinner, however ill-deserving. I saw he was ready to do it: that all might come, even the vilest and the worst, encouraged by the self-moving goodness and boundless grace of God, and the mediation, merits, and atonement of Christ; I looked up to God through Jesus Christ for mercy, and through Jesus Christ gave up myself to the Lord, to be for ever his, to love him and live to him for ever. Here prostrate on the ground, I thus lay above an hour, contemplating the ineffable glories of God, the beauty of his law, and the superabundant excellency of the Gospel-way of life, by free grace through Jesus Christ. I believed the Gospel, I trusted in Christ, and gave up myself to God through him, to be for ever his, with a pleasure divinely sweet, infinitely perferable to the most agreeable sensations I had ever before experienced. What I enjoyed this hour, did more, unspeakably more, than overbalance all the distresses

of months past [e]. To relate how I spent the night, and how I have spent my days and nights ever since, I shall omit. But you shall soon hear again, my dear Aspasio, from

YOUR AFFECTIONATE

THERON.

e Theron's Narrative of his former supposed conversion, (Let. I.) and of his experiences, (here,) is not designed to suggest, that either false or true converts all experience things, in every circumstance, just alike: but only to point out the general nature of these two kinds of conversion, in a manner so familiar, that the weakest Christian may see the difference. And if any Christian cannot recollect so exactly the particulars of his first conversion, yet as all after-acts of grace are of the same nature with the first, a clear understanding of the true nature of saving grace, may help him to discern his true state.

* N. B. What is the true nature of saving grace, is not to be decided by the experiences of this or that man, or party of men; but only by the word of God.

LETTER III.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

New-England, April 2, 1759.

DEAR ASPASIO,

WITH pleasure I now again sit down to write to my distant friend, and send my heart beyond the Atlantic to my Aspasio. For neither time, nor place, nor any change, can wipe your memory from my mind.

Methinks, were I now with you, as once at the house, the hospitable house, of the wealthy and illustrious Philenor, I would tell you all my heart. I remember how you urged me to believe, and how I longed to find some safe foundation, some sure evidence, on which to build my faith; and with Thomas, to cry, *my Lord, my God!* Now I have found it! I have found it! I *believe, that Jesus is the Christ.* 1 John v. 1. I believe, that *God hath set him forth to be a propitiation: to declare his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* Rom. iii. 25, 26. I *believe, that God raised him from the dead.* Rom. x. 9. I believe, that *Christ is entered into heaven, now to appear in the presence of God,* as the Jewish high-priest of old entered into the holy of holies on the day of atonement, (Heb. ix. 24.) and that he is *the way to the Father,* (John xiv. 6.) the *door, by whom men enter in.* John x. 9. And that *whosoever will, may come* to God through him. Rev. xxii. 17. Wherefore I am emboldened to *enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,* even into the very presence of the *thrice holy* ONE *of Israel,* in whose sight *the heavens are not clean;* and to come to God in *full assurance of faith, nothing doubting* but that God is as willing to be reconciled through Christ, as the father was to receive the returning prodigal; and as ready to *give his holy spirit to them that ask him,* as ever parent was to give bread to an hungry child. Heb. x. 19. 22. Mat. vii. 11. *For he that spared not his own Son, but*

delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things; if we accept his Son as he is offered, and come to God through him, for all things, as we are invited? Rom. viii. 32 John i. 12. and xvi. 23. For God's honour is safe, God's law is answered, God's justice is satisfied; and all my guilt, infinite as it is, is no bar in the way of my reception into the divine favour, free as his infinite grace, self-moving as his boundless goodness is, and appears to be, by the gift of his Son.

This way of salvation, my dear Aspasio, is glorious for God, safe for the sinner, effectual to promote holiness, even *the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth*; and if the Gospel is true there is no room to doubt. "For we are constrained to believe on the clearest evidence." Yea, "our assurance is impressed" by complete demonstration.

It is glorious for God.—For God's law and authority are as much honoured, as if the whole world had been damned. And his grace more glorified, than if man had never fell. An incarnate God upon the cross, in the room of a rebellious world, sets God's infinite hatred of sin, his inflexible resolution to punish it, and the infinite goodness of his nature, in a light infinitely clear, infinitely bright; and contains a fund of instruction, which never can be exhausted, by angels and saints, throughout the endless ages of eternity. The more I think, the more I am swallowed up, confounded, overwhelmed! O! *the height, the depth, the length, the breadth, of the love of God, which passeth all understanding*; O! *the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God.* The creation of the universe was a great work. It caused the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator clearly to be seen. But compared to the incarnation and death of the Son of God, the Creator, it is not to be mentioned, nor is it worthy to come into mind. Even the application of Christ's redemption in the latter day, is a more glorious work than the first creation of the world. Isai. lxv. 17. *Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.* Indeed, it had been but a small thing, for the Creator, by his almighty word, to have called millions of such systems as ours into being; a thing

not worthy to be noticed, nay, scarce worth one single thought, compared with, with what? Let all nature tremble at the news, the incarnation, and the death of the ALMIGHTY CREATOR, in the room of his rebel creatures, that the honour of his father's law and government might be effectually secured, while sovereign infinite grace interposes to save the self-ruined, hell-deserving rebels, to the eternal disappointment of satan, God's enemy, and our mortal foe!

And can it now, after all this, be a question, whether God is ready to be reconciled to those who, on his own invitation, return to him through Jesus Christ? Or can it be a question, whether Christ is willing to be their Mediator and High-priest, in the court of heaven, in the holy of holies above? What! after God has given his Son to die, that consistently with his honour he might receive such to favour; he not willing! infinitely incredible!—What! after the Son of God has left his Father's bosom, to lie in a manger! to groan in the garden! And, *be astonished, O ye heavens, and be ye horribly afraid!*—To hang and die upon the cross, in the room of a God-hating, Christ-murdering world; that he might honour his Father's law, break up satan's plot, and open a way for the sinner's return! Yet he not willing!—What! willing to die on the cross, and not willing to mediate in heaven! infinitely incredible! Yea, if possible, more than infinitely incredible! So certain, my dear Aspasio, as the Gospel is true, just so certain may your Theron be, that God is ready to be reconciled to the sinner, who returns to him through Jesus Christ. Nor does he need a new revelation in the case; nor does he need to be assured of any proposition not plainly revealed in the Gospel. Enough has been already DONE! enough has been already SAID! But never did your Theron believe these things with all his heart, till by seeing the glory of the God of glory, he saw the grounds and reasons of the law, pronounced it holy, just, and good, and worthy to be magnified and made honourable, even by the death of GOD'S OWN SON. 1 John v. 1.

And this kind of faith, in the nature of things, cannot be without works. For, while your Theron, through the influences of the Holy Spirit, doth *with open face, behold as in a*

glass, the glory of the Lord; what can he do, but love, admire, adore the God of glory; and give up himself for ever to him through Jesus Christ? And now, *how can we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* We are *crucified with Christ; buried with him; risen with him;* and can sin, after all, *have dominion over us!* Impossible. Rom. vi. 2. 14. The gratitude, the ingenuity of unrenewed nature, I grant, is not to be depended upon. *Israel sang God's praise, but soon forgot his works.* But, *beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,* from day to day, through the course of our lives, *we are,* we cannot but be, *changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

And, believing the Gospel to be true, no doubt remains of the safety of our returning to God through Jesus Christ. His glory and beauty inclines me to return. His grace through Christ puts courage in my heart. I return. I find rest to my weary soul. And by this I know, my "faith is real, and no delusion," even *because he hath given me of his spirit,* (1 John iv. 13.) set his seal upon my heart, (Eph. 1. 13.) made me his child, in the very temper of my soul, (Rom. viii. 16.) and *in my heart his law is written, and in his ways I love to walk.* Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. But as to this, heaven forbid that your Theron's confidence should ever be greater than his evidence; his evidence, not only now, but in all future times.—I am, for ever,

YOUR AFFECTIONATE

THERON.

LETTER IV.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

New-England, April 3, 1759.

DEAR ASPASIO,

MANY an agreeable hour have we wandered over all the works of nature; viewed the heavens above, the earth beneath, and surveyed the mighty ocean; nor did you ever fail to intermingle devout reflections. If now, instead of painting the beauties of the creation, we rise at once to contemplate the glories of the CREATOR, glories infinitely superior to those of fields and forests, gardens and palaces; yea, infinitely superior to the bright expanse of heaven, adorned with all its shining orbs; no theme can, my Aspasio, better please.

GOD! how awful is the name! how great is the Being! *Behold the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Yea, all nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.* And so great is the excellency of the DIVINE MAJESTY; so exceeding great is his beauty, that to behold his glory, and love, and honour, and enjoy him, is heaven itself; it is the chief happiness of all that world. The seraphim, while he sitteth on his throne, high and lifted up as the great MONARCH of the universe, through the brightness of his glory, cover their faces, unable to behold; and, as in a perfect ecstasy, cry, *holy, holy, holy!*—This is his character, the character he exemplifies in all his conduct, as Lord of hosts, as governor of the world; in a view of which, they add, *the whole earth is full of his glory.* Isai. vi. 3.

The two grandest affairs, which, according to Scripture, ever have been, or ever will be, transacted in the government of this glorious monarch, are the work of our REDEMPTION by the death of his Son, and the final JUDGMENT of the

world. These, therefore, let us contemplate, that in them we may behold, *as in a glass, the glory of the LORD.*

Who was his Son? *The brightness of his glory, and the image of his person; by whom, and for whom, all things were created;* loved equally to himself, and honoured with equal honours in all the world above. Let us view him on the cross, incarnate! View him there as an incarnate God, dying for sinners! And fix our attention, whole hours together, on this greatest and most wonderful of all God's works! The plan was laid in heaven. This great event was *determined in the council* there. Acts iv. 28. All the perfections of the Godhead sat in council, when it was decreed the Son of God should die. Strange decree! Why was it made? Astonishing! Why did it ever come to pass? Did he die to move the compassions of his almighty Father towards a rebellious race? No: for to give his Son thus to die, was greater grace, than at one sovereign stroke to have cancelled all our debt, and pardoned all the world. Did he die to take away, or lessen, the evil nature and ill-desert of sin? No: for infinite purity and impartial justice must look upon the rebellions of a revolted world, as odious and ill-deserving as if he had not died. He died, to bear the punishment due to us. We were under the curse; he was made a curse in our room; *set forth to be a propitiation,* by his holy Father, *to declare his righteousness,* and show the rectitude of his government in the eyes of all created intelligences; *that he might be just,* do as his law threatens, and yet not *damn, but justify, the sinner that believeth in Jesus.*

Eternal damnation was our due, according to the divine law; a law not founded in arbitrary will. A law arbitrarily made, may be arbitrarily repealed; but a law only declaring what is fit, must for ever stand in force. To rise in rebellion against the infinitely glorious Majesty of heaven, deserved eternal damnation; as he is infinitely worthy of the highest love and honour from all his intelligent creatures. His infinite amiableness and honourableness infinitely oblige us to love and honour him. All our heart and mind and strength are his due. The least defect deserves eternal wo. Thus the omniscient viewed the case. His Son, in the same

view, approved the law as strictly just. Both looked on the sacrifice and death of an incarnate God, in the room of sinners, to open a way for their salvation, as a plan infinitely preferable to the law's repeal by a sovereign act. The Son had rather endure the most painful, shameful death, than that one tittle of the law should fail; it was so strictly just. God ought to have his due. The law barely asserts the rights of the Godhead. So much, however, was his due, as to be loved, with all the heart, and obeyed in every thing. And so worthy was the Deity of this love and obedience, that the least defect deserved eternal death. "'Tis right, 'tis right," said the eternal SON, "that the first instance, or the least degree of disrespect to my eternal Father, should incur eternal ruin to the sinning creature. And I had rather become incarnate and die myself, than yield this point." That GOD is infinitely amiable; that he ought to be loved with all our heart; that the infinite excellency of his nature infinitely obliges us, can never be set in a stronger light, than it is by the cross of CHRIST.

The infinite dignity of the Mediator, and the extreme sufferings he underwent, as an equivalent to our eternal wo, in the loudest manner proclaim, that the law was just; just in the eyes of God; and just in the eyes of his Son. A law, threatening eternal damnation, infinite goodness would never have enacted, had not impartial justice called for it. Much less would infinite goodness have appointed God's own Son to answer its demands, if in its own nature too severe. To suppose, the Son of God died to answer the demands of a law, in its own nature cruel, is to make God a tyrant, and the death of his Son the most shocking affair that ever happened!

But what did this law, of which we so often speak, require? Say, my dear Aspasio, what was the first and chief command? Your master's answer you approve. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.* But why was love required? Because God was lovely. And why the penalty so great? Because his loveliness was infinite. If the infinite amiableness of the divine being does not lay an infinite obligation on his creatures, to love him for being what he is, how can we justify

the law's demands, or vindicate the wisdom of God in the death of his Son?

From the cross, where an incarnate God asserted the rights of the Godhead by his dying pains, let us pass to the awful tribunal; where the same incarnate God, arrayed in all his Father's glory, with all the hosts of heaven in his train, by the last sentence, which he will pronounce upon his Father's enemies, dooming them to the burning lake, to welter for eternal ages in wo, will still proclaim the justice of the law: Would infinite goodness, would our compassionate Saviour, would he who wept over Jerusalem, the kind and tender-hearted Jesus, love to pronounce a sentence so infinitely dreadful, if it were not strictly just? Yet he will do it, without the least reluctance; yea, with the highest pleasure: while angels and saints shout forth their hallelujahs, all around him.

But can this ever be accounted for, on any other hypothesis, than that the infinitely glorious MONARCH of the universe appears, clearly appears, in that solemn hour, to be infinitely worthy of all that love and honour his law required, in being what he is; and so sin an infinite evil?

If sin is really an infinite evil, then it is meet that it should be discountenanced and punished as such, i. e. with an infinite punishment, i. e. with the eternal pains of hell. And it was fit, that the governor of the world should make a law, thus to punish it. And fit, that this law should be magnified and made honourable. And even wise, in the eyes of infinite wisdom, that one by nature GOD, should become incarnate, and die in the sinner's stead, rather than set the law aside. And on this hypothesis, the final doom of the wicked may well appear perfectly beautiful in the eyes of all holy intelligences. But sin cannot be an infinite evil, unless we are under infinite obligations to do otherwise.

LOVE is the thing required. Not merely a love of gratitude to God, as an almighty benefactor: but a love of esteem, complacence, and delight. We may feel grateful to a benefactor, merely as such, without even a knowledge of his general character: yea, when his general character would not suit us, did we know it. The Israelites, notwithstanding their joy and gratitude at the side of the Red sea, were far from a

disposition to be suited, to be pleased, to be enamoured, with such a being as GOD was. Yea, the more they knew of him, the less they seemed to like him; so that in less than two years they were for going back to Egypt again. But if we may feel grateful towards God, merely as our almighty benefactor, without the knowledge of his true character; yet esteem, complacence, and delight, suppose his true character known; as that is the object of this kind of love. And what can lay us under infinite obligations to love God, in this sense, but his own infinite AMIABLENESS? Yet the divine law requires us to love God with this kind of love; and that with all our hearts, on pain of eternal damnation for the least defect. And this law was binding on all mankind, previously to a consideration of the gift of Christ to be a Saviour.

While, therefore, the law supposes our obligations to be infinite; and the death of the Son of God, and the final judgment, give the highest possible proof, that the OMNISCIENT esteems the law exactly right; the infinite dignity, excellency, and glory of the MOST HIGH GOD, is hereby set in the strongest point of light.

Take away the infinite amiableness of the Deity, and we, in effect, ungod him: He ceases to be the GOD OF GLORY; He ceases to be a proper object of this supreme regard, in the eyes of finite intelligences. It is no longer an infinite evil, not to love him; the law is no longer just; the death of Christ is needless; and the whole system of doctrine revealed in the bible, is sapped at the foundation; nothing remains, to a thinking man, but infidelity.

And yet, dear Aspasio, this was my very case. The infinite amiableness of the Deity, which is the real foundation of all true religion, was wholly left out of the account, in my love and joy, and in all my religious affections. All my love, and joy, and zeal, arose from my faith. And my faith consisted but in believing that Christ, pardon, and heaven were mine. I rejoiced just like the graceless Israelites, in a sense of their great deliverence, and in expectation of soon arriving to the promised land, a land *flowing with milk and honey, the glory of all lands.* Theirs was a graceless, selfish joy; and so was mine.—Theirs was soon over; and so was mine. Their car-

cases finally fell in the wilderness; and, but for the sovereign grace of God, this also had been my very case.

Oh! my dear Aspasio, whose entertaining pen gains the attention of thousands on both sides the Atlantic, pity the ignorance of benighted souls, and guard them against the dangers, which had well nigh proved the ruin of your own pupil.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE

THERON.

LETTER V.

THERON TO ASPASIO.

New-England, April 4, 1759.

MY DEAR ASPASIO,

WHILE I view God the Creator, whose almighty word gave existence to the whole system: while I view him as the original author and sole proprietor of the whole universe; whose are all things in heaven and earth; I see the right of government naturally belongs to him. It is meet, that he should be KING in his own world. And he cannot but have a rightful authority over the works of his own hands. While I view him as moral governor of the world, seated at the head of the intelligent creation, *on a throne high and lifted up*, heaven and earth *filled with his glory* as the THRICE HOLY ONE; and hear him utter his voice, saying, I AM THE LORD, and BESIDES ME THERE IS NO OTHER GOD; and hear him command all the world to *love and adore and obey him, on pain of eternal damnation:* a spirit of love to his glorious majesty inspires me with joy, and makes me exult, to see him thus exalted, and thus honoured. I love to hear him proclaim his law, a law *holy, just, and good*, glorious and amiable. I am glad with all my heart, the almighty Monarch of the universe is so engaged, that all his subjects *give unto God the glory due unto his name.* Ps. xcvi. 8.

His law, his glorious law, which once, enemy to God that I was, appeared like "the laws of Draco," now shines with a beauty all divine. I had almost said, it is *the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.* For indeed it is an exact transcript of his glorious perfections, the very picture of his heart, *holy, just,* and *good.* Rom. vii. 12.

When the God of glory dwelt in the Jewish temple, in the pillar of cloud, over the mercy-seat, his law was by his special command deposited in the ark, the very holiest place in the holy of holies, as the dearest choicest treasure. Thus

was it done to the law, which God delighted to honour. But this honour, great as it was, is not to be mentioned, nor is it worthy to come into mind, since that infinitely greater regard to the divine law, which God has shown in the gift of his Son. An incarnate God on the cross, has *magnified the law, and made it honourable*, beyond, infinitely beyond, what was ever done before. But all this honour, infinitely great as it was, was but just equal to what the law deserved.

While I view God, my creator, my rightful Lord and owner, my sovereign king, the *God of glory*; and see his infinite worthiness of supreme love and honour; I feel, that the least disrespect of his glorious majesty is an infinite evil. I pronounce the law in all its rigour, *holy, just, and good*. Even as a *ministration of death and condemnation, it appears glorious*, (2 Cor. iii. 7, 8.) and I heartily acquiesce in the equity of the sentence, with application to myself. This makes me feel my need of CHRIST, and prepares my heart to return home to God, for ever to live to him. *For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.* Gal. ii. 19.

The law, my dear Aspasio, threatens eternal damnation for the very first transgression, for even the least defect. Gal. iii. 10. I break the law every moment; and therefore every moment I merit eternal wo. Such an infinite evil is sin. It appeared glorious in the eyes of GOD, thus to punish sin, when he made his law; it appeared glorious in the eyes of CHRIST, that sin should be thus punished, when he went as a lamb to the altar, and voluntarily stretched himself upon the cross to die in the sinner's room. And in a clear view of the glory of the *God of glory*, I see the grounds and reasons of the law; it is *holy, just, and good*. I see why Christ was so willing to be nailed to the cross in the sinner's stead; *to magnify the law and make it honourable*. And I *have fellowship*, a fellow-feeling, *with Christ in his sufferings*; and in the temper of my heart, am *made conformable to his death*. Phil. iii. 10. I feel towards God, and law, and sin, in a measure, as he did. Or, to express all my heart in one emphatical phrase I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST. Gal. ii. 20. "The law is good, I deserve to die. I lay my neck

upon the block, or rather stretch my hands upon the cross: and say, the *law is holy, just, and good,* and cry, AMEN, AMEN, AMEN, twelve times going:" as God, of old taught his church to do. Deut. xxvi. 14. 20 [f].

Oh, my dear Aspasio! in the time of the late rebellion, when I lived in England, had I, through a hearty attachment to the pretender's interest, secretly, poisoned ten of the house of Lords, and twenty of the house of Commons, from mere spite, only because of their loyalty to their rightful sovereign; and had I laid a plot to blow up King and Parliament, burn the city of London, and deliver the nation into the hands of a popish pretender, all through pure malignity, what would it have availed before a court of justice, after I was arraigned, convicted, and condemned, to have pleaded, "Oh, spare my

f I must confess, my dear Aspasio, I am shocked to hear some divines represent the law as a tyrant, as tyrannizing over Christ upon the cross, as tyrannizing over sinners, as being slain for its tyranny, &c. For these hard speeches are not so much against the law, as against the God that made it. Just as if God and his law were tyrants, while Christ and his Gospel are *all made up of* LOVE! But shocking as this is, yet I must own, this was once the very temper of my heart. (See the Marrow of Modern Divinity, with Notes, p. 146.) I loved the Gospel: I did not love the law. The dying love of Christ, O how sweet a theme! Law, obligation, duty, were disagreeable, dead, and legal things. Faith, pardon, joy, heaven, grace, free grace, these topics only ravished my heart. Christ loved the law, or he had never died: I only loved myself. The honour of his Father's law was dear to him. Heb. i. 9. Ps. xl. 8. Matt. v. 17, 18. Myself alone was dear to me. I viewed his death, his dying love, as all for me. His agony in the garden, his bloody sweat, his dying groans, all out of love to me! This pleased my heart. His Father's glory I had never seen: the law's beauty I had never beheld. The wisdom of God in the death of his Son, I had never brought into the account. Love, love! love to me, to me! was all in all. This only ravished my heart. I loved myself, I only loved myself. Strange, that I should think my love to Christ so great! The very joy I had, to think he died for me, was a full proof that I loved him not at all; since I did not delight in the law, nor love the law, in honour to which he died. Had my wife, or child, or friend, or any whom I loved, been punished by that law, I had been full of grief, and thought it very hard: for indeed that law appeared to me like the laws of Draco. But when CHRIST was the victim, I was pleased; for I loved myself: but CHRIST I did not love. I cared not what he suffered, nor why; if I myself was safe. In truth, if the law is not *holy, just,* and *good,* glorious and amiable, the death of CHRIST, to answer its demands, is the most shocking affair that ever happened. But I was wholly swallowed up in self: and, "if I was but safe, I cared not how."

life; I am sorry for what I have done; I will never do so any more; I will be a good and loyal subject for the time to come!" Especially, if all the court knew I was a jacobite by blood, and had shown myself a jacobite, in ten thousand instances, all my life long, and had still very much of the heart of a jacobite; and had lived and died a perfect jacobite in heart and practice, were it not for some irresistible arguments, or rather something more powerful than arguments, that had begun to give me a new turn of mind; would my penitence be esteemed any atonement for my horrid crimes? Nay, rather, would not the whole nation cry, "Away with such a vile wretch from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" And were I brought to view the whole affair in a right light, and to feel right; what would be the language of my heart? would it not echo back the general cry? "Right! right! away with such a vile wretch from the earth! for, indeed, I am not fit to live!" And on the gallows, even in my dying agonies, I should not have the least reason to dislike the law, by which I was condemned; or to love my judges ever the less for pronouncing the sentence of condemnation upon me. But rather, with all my heart, I ought to approve the law as good; and esteem their conduct to be truly praise-worthy.

But to murder thirty of my fellow-worms, blow up King and parliament, burn a city, ruin a nation, viewed only as injuries to a civil community, and breaches of a civil law, are no crimes, in comparison with rising in rebellion against the INFINITELY GLORIOUS MONARCH OF THE UNIVERSE; compared with whom, the whole created system is *less than nothing and vanity* [g].

g Is it a sinner's duty to be willing to be damned? No, by no means. The damned will for ever hate God. The sinner ought for ever to love him. The damned will be for ever miserable. The sinner is invited to be for ever happy, through Christ. His duty is to be reconciled to God, and return to him through Jesus Christ. Indeed, were there no other way to support the honour of the divine government, but by the eternal misery of the sinner, the sinner ought to be willing that the honour of the divine government should be supported, although at the expense of his eternal sufferings. God and Christ, angels and saints, will all be of this mind at the day of judgment, with respect to the wick-

Wherefore, in my best frames, in my devoutest hours, when I feel the greatest veneration for the Deity, and the greatest regard to his law, and am most sorry that I ever have been, and am still such a vile rebel against my rightful sovereign, the GOD of GLORY; I am so far from thinking that I am fit to live, that my whole heart is ready to say, "No! but infinitely unfit to live! Eternal death is my due! And hell my proper home!" Yea, it appears to me, although I had attained to love God and Christ in the same degree as Saint Paul did, and were as willing to die in the cause of religion as he was, that yet I should merit hell every moment for not loving God and Christ more. And therefore, with him I would *have no confidence in the flesh;* and would seek to be found, not in myself, but in Christ; not having my own righteousness, but his. Phil. iii. 3. 9. And would say, *In the Lord* alone *have I righteousness, and in him* alone *will I glory.* Isai. xlv. 24, 25.

Yea, suffer me to say, I apprehend, and verily believe, that even Saint Paul himself deserved eternal damnation, for that wickedness which God saw in his heart, then, at that instant, when a little before he died a martyr, he said, *I am now ready to be offered.* For although he was willing, quite willing to die for his master; yet he did not love him perfectly as he ought. He himself owns, he had *not already attained, nor was already perfect.* But the least defect deserves punishment, yea, eternal damnation. Therefore, Saint Paul always felt in his heart, that hell was his proper due; and always looked on the law, even as a *ministration of death and condemnation,* to be *glorious,* (2 Cor. iii. 7. 9.) and always placed all his dependence, for acceptance in the sight of God, on Jesus Christ. He did so, not only when first converted, but habitually, all the days of his life, to his very last breath.

O, in how lively, how striking a manner, are all these sentiments expressed in those words of the blessed apostle, in Gal. ii. 19, 20. which were the genuine language of his heart,

ed. And they will all judge rightly. Rom. ii. 2. Nor will the wicked have any reason to dislike them for it; but rather to esteem their conduct herein truly praise-worthy. Rev. xix. 1. 6.

and give a picture of the inward temper of his soul. *I through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live to God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life I live in the flesh,* even to my latest breath, *I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Who loved me,* as his own before the foundation of the world; and in the fulness of time, *gave himself for me,* as one whom the Father had given to him. For, in the midst of these holy views and gracious exercises of heart, Saint Paul's Calling and Election were always sure; and he steadily knew, that he was of that blessed number for whom Christ died, with an absolute design to save. Yet this knowledge was not the foundation, but rather the consequence of his faith and holiness.

Your Theron does no more doubt of God's readiness to be reconciled to the sinner, that returns to him through Jesus Christ, than he doubts of the truth of the Gospel. He believes the one just as firmly as he believes the other. If the chief facts related in the Gospel are true, he knows this consequence is equally true. If God has so pitied this apostate world, as to give his own Son to die a sacrifice for sin to answer the demands of his law, and secure the honour of his government, for this very end, that *he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus;* and if he has testified his acceptance of the atonement, by raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand in heaven. I say, if these facts are true, your Theron knows the consequence cannot but be true, viz. That any sinner, how ill deserving soever, who upon the invitation of the Gospel, shall *repent and be converted,* shall return to God through Jesus Christ, he will be accepted, pardoned, and saved, for Christ's sake. And, *beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,* I cannot but return and give up myself to God through Jesus Christ with all my heart. Psalm cx. 8. John xvii. 3. 8. Psalm ix. 10.

Such were the views; such were the tempers of the Apostle Paul, who wrote, and of the Christians to whom he directed his Epistles; as he himself affirms. 2 Cor. iii. 18. And it was under such views, and in consequence of such tempers, that they were assured, the spiritual and everlasting

blessings of the Gospel were *theirs*; as another Apostle asserts, 1 John ii. 3, 4, 5. And in such views, and with such tempers, Saint Paul might well expect, that the consideration of the infinite goodness of God towards them, in their election, redemption, effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, and in the eternal joys of heaven, to be certainly bestowed upon them, would powerfully animate them to *present themselves a living sacrifice to God*, to be for ever entirely his. Rom. xii. 1.

The Saints at Rome, viewed *the wrath of God* as *revealed from heaven against all ungodliness*, against the least sin, felt themselves *without excuse*, their *mouths stopped, guilty before God*, according to law; a law holy, just, and good; were therefore dead to the law and married to Christ, exercised faith in the blood of Christ, depending entirely on *free grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus*. And as by virtue of their union with Adam, they became sinners; so by virtue of their union with Christ, by a true and living faith, they became righteous. And were *dead to sin*, so that they *could not any longer live therein*. For they not only approved the law as holy, just, and good, but even *delighted in the law of God after the inward man*, and maintained a constant conflict against every contrary bias. For they were made partakers of the divine nature; had every one of them the spirit of Christ dwelling in them; and *walked not after the flesh, but after the spirit*; were daily led by the spirit, and lived under the government of divine grace, feeling the temper of children towards God; crying, *Abba, Father*. And if children, they knew they were heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. And as they were willing to suffer with Christ, they expected to reign with him. And they esteemed the sufferings of this present life not worthy to be compared with the glory they had in view, in a future state. Besides, they found by experience, that all their sufferings worked together for their good, brought them nearer to God, and made them more like him. And they were persuaded that nothing in life or death should ever separate them from the love of God; who, of his mere sovereign grace, had predestinated, called, and done all things for them; not because they had

any claim to make, but because *he would have mercy on whom he would have mercy;* of the same lump, making one a vessel to honour, and another a vessel to dishonour. Which sovereign right to dispose of his own grace, they saw belonged to God; *of whom, and by whom, and to whom, are all things; to whom be glory for ever!* Wherefore, as the fittest and happiest thing in the world, they brought themselves, soul and body, as the Jew used to bring his bullock to the altar, and presented themselves *a living sacrifice to God;* seeking daily to be more and more transformed into the divine image, and devoting themselves, in all humility and love, to the duties of their several places; *not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.* (Please to read the 12 first chapters of the Epistle to the Romans.)

The Saints at Ephesus also, who formerly had their *understandings darkened,* their *hearts blind* and *alienated from God;* yea, who were quite *dead in sin;* and so far from any right to claim mercy, that they were *without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world:* yea, even *by nature children of wrath:* yet these, of God's mere sovereign grace, according to his purpose before the foundation of the world, were quickened, had divine life communicated to them, were *raised from the dead,* were brought to know Jesus Christ, and trust in him; in consequence of which they were sealed, had the holy Spirit given to dwell in them, whereby they were furnished to all good works. And conscious to this divine change and to the glorious blessings they were now made partakers of, they were fervently engaged to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called; to live up to their holy religion; to forgive others as God had forgiven them, and in all things to imitate their heavenly Father, being followers all *with singleness of heart, as unto the Lord,* &c. (Please to read over the whole Epistle.)

But time once was, O my dear Aspasio, when your Theron, not conscious of any sanctifying operations in his own breast, believed all the blessings of the Gospel to be his, without any "evidence from Scripture, sense or reason." Which belief served to still his conscience, and keep him at ease, while blind to the beauty of the divine nature, and a

stranger to divine life. And in this case, having no sufficient evidence from inherent graces, to support his confidence, he was obliged, without any evidence at all from any quarter, resolutely to maintain his belief, by believing. Oh, what awful delusion! How was I like one blindfold; one destitute of any sense or reason, or knowledge of the Scriptures, *led captive by satan at his will!* by *satan transformed into an angel of light.*

Oh, my dear Aspasio, pity an ignorant benighted world, who love to flatter themselves, and to hear no cry from their teachers, but PEACE, PEACE; and guard them against the sad delusion which had well-nigh proved the ruin of your own Theron.

If all your sentiments, as thy exist in your own mind, are exactly right; if you had not the least design to convey one of those mistaken notions, which your Theron imbibed from your persuasive lips; if he misunderstood just every word, and framed a mere chimera in his own head, a chimera you abhor with all your heart; yet, O my kind, my tender-hearted, my dear Aspasio, pity an ignorant world, who are like generally to understand you as I have done; and in compassion to immortal souls, be entreated, once more to take your fine, your entertaining, charming pen, which commands the attention of thousands, and ten thousands through all the British dominions in Europe and America, and warn poor sinners of their dreadful danger; lest multitudes perish in the road: the bewitching, the enchanting road, once trodden by your own pupil; and to which, but for the sovereign grace of God, he had been for ever lost! It is the humble and earnest request of

YOUR EVER AFFECTIONATE

THERON.

END OF LETTERS AND DIALOGUES.

AN

ESSAY

ON

THE NATURE AND GLORY

OF

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST:

AS ALSO ON

THE NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS,

AND THE

NATURE AND EFFECTS OF DIVINE ILLUMINATION.

DESIGNED AS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE AUTHOR'S

LETTERS AND DIALOGUES,

ON THE NATURE OF

LOVE TO GOD, FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, AND ASSURANCE

OF

A TITLE TO ETERNAL LIFE.

"We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, "are changed into the same image."

"But if our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost." ST. PAUL.

PREFACE.

THERE are, perhaps, few, if any, among the various sects and parties of professing Christians, but that will readily give their assent to this proposition; "He who understands the Gospel of Jesus Christ aright, sees it in its glory, believes it to be true with all his heart, and is affected and acts accordingly, is a true Christian, and will finally inherit eternal life." But put the question, *what is the Gospel of Christ?* and let each one for himself, learned and unlearned, throughout Christendom, prepare and give in an answer, and it will be found that there is a great variety of opinions; and that the learned differ as much as the unlearned; and that the seemingly devout and religious differ, as much as the more loose and profane. The more any man acquaints himself with the state of the Christian world, at home and abroad, the more he converses with men and books, the more clearly will he discern this to be the true state of the case. And now, *what shall be done?*

To say, in this case, "That notwithstanding circumstantial differences, the body of professing Christians agree in the main; and we must not be so exact, metaphysical, and nice," is the same as to say, "Let your ideas be so general, confused, and indeterminate about matters of religion, as that you may not distinctly discern the differences which do in fact take place: and be so very unconcerned about your eternal interest, as not to think it worth your while to look things to the bottom. Go on easy in this way, and cry out against, and condemn all exact thinking and clear reasoning in matters of religion, as metaphysics: an *hocus pocus* word, to blacken an inquiring disposition, and to justify an astonishing inattention, in a "matter of infinite, of everlasting concern." And this, while all men of sense agree to commend, the most exact, thinking, and clear reasoning, on any other subject, but that of religion.

To say, "it is no matter what men's principles be, if their lives are but good;" is the same as to say, "Paganism and

Mahometanism are as safe ways to heaven, as Christianity, which is downright infidelity.

To say, "good men may differ: there are more ways to heaven than one, all equally safe: it is needless to be at pains to look things to the bottom:" is much the same as to say, "Let every one sincerely live up to his own scheme, and he will be safe." Which again will land one on the shores of infidelity.

When our blessed Saviour sent his apostles abroad into the world, it was with this commission: *Go, preach the Gospel to every creature, and he that believeth,* (the very Gospel I send you to preach,) *and is baptized, shall be saved. But he that believeth not,* (the very gospel I send you to preach,) *shall be damned.* And according to this commission, they went and preached, and gathered Churches, and then said, not from an uncharitable disposition, but merely viewing things in the light of their Master's words; *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.* And when false teachers arose, and endeavoured to accommodate the Gospel-scheme a little better to the taste, the natural taste of mankind; the very chief of the apostles, as it were, stepped forth into the view of the whole Christian world, and with an assurance and solemnity, becoming one inspired by heaven, said, *but though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.* Gal. 8, 9. "But what shall I do?" says a poor, ignorant, benighted soul, anxious for his eternal welfare. "Were all learned religious sort of men agreed, I should think I might safely believe as they believe; but now I am perfectly disconcerted and confounded. And is it likely such a poor, ignorant creature as I am, should ever find the truth, and see to the bottom, of these controversies, so as to know what is right, and what is wrong? What shall I do?"

Were the differences subsisting in the Christian world really owing to any obscurity in divine revelation itself, I do not see how poor, ignorant people could be to blame in being

thus at a loss. Or indeed, if after all they should happen to believe wrong, to mistake some false Gospel for the true one, I do not see how they could be to blame, much less so much, so very much to blame, as to merit eternal damnation. When, therefore, our blessed Saviour so peremptorily declares, *He that believeth not shall be damned,* let him be who he will among all mankind, who shall hear the Gospel, it is a complete demonstration, that in the judgment of our blessed Saviour, the Gospel-revelation is quite plain enough, upon a level even with vulgar capacities; so that it cannot be misunderstood or misbelieved, by any individual, unless the fault is in himself: yea, unless he is so greatly to blame in the affair, as justly to merit eternal damnation. To say otherwise, is to charge our Saviour with injustice, in denouncing eternal damnation against every unbeliever. Which again, is no better than downright infidelity.

"But how can these things be?" may an inquisitive reader say. "For if the true Gospel of Christ were so clearly revealed in the sacred writings, how unaccountable is it, that the Christian world so greatly differ?" Not unaccountable at all, only granting what must be granted, or Christianity be given up, that the true Gospel of Christ contains a system of sentiments diametrically opposite to every vicious bias in the human heart. Such a system it contains, or it did not come from God. And if it does contain such a system, then, so long as the generality of mankind are under the influence of their vicious biasses, they will naturally seek darkness rather than light; self-justifying error, rather than self-condemning truth; and it is well known how apt men are to believe that to be true, which they wish to have so in other matters besides that of religion. Besides,

Tell me whence was it, that, in the apostolic age; whence was it, that, in the very days of miracles and inspiration, professed Christians began to differ? Was it because the sacred writings were obscure? Why then did they not inquire at the mouths of the apostles, who were yet alive, and who all agreed among themselves? Nay, inquire at the apostles' mouths: indeed, no. They would rather call their inspiration into question, than submit to their decision.

Saint Paul found himself so vigorously opposed by false teachers among the Galatians, that with all his miracles, inspirations, and elaborate reasonings, he could not keep up the credit of his scheme, no, not even among his own converts, who once were ready to pluck out their eyes for him; rather, in endeavouring to keep the truth up, his own credit sunk by the means. Gal. iv. 16. And a little before his death, after full experience of the nature of error and delusion, he plainly tells his son Timothy, that the case with some was really hopeless; saying, *Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.* 2 Tim. iii. 13. And while the apostles were some of them yet living, numbers of their converts actually separated from their churches; numbers of their graceless converts, I mean. 1 John ii. 19. *They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.*

Now it cannot be pretended there was any want of external light and evidence, needful to discern and ascertain the truth, in that age; and nevertheless, matters began to work then very much as they have all along since. It is not therefore, through want of light and evidence externally held forth, that men have gone into error, in one age and another, who have had the bible in their hands; but it has been entirely owing to the vicious state of their minds. And therefore saint Paul reckons *heresies* among the *works of the flesh*, and gives them a place along with *adultery, fornication, witchcraft, murder, drunkenness*, &c. as being criminal in the same sense with them. Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.

And indeed the sum and substance of the Gospel may be reduced to two or three points, which must be in a manner self-evident to a mind rightly disposed; or to use our Saviour's words, to those who have *a good and honest heart.* For as all Christians were baptized *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;* so right apprehensions of the character and offices of these three, is the sum of all Christian knowledge. For he who believes God the Father, the supreme Governor of the world, to be by nature God, an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable

Being, infinitely worthy of that supreme love and honour, and universal obedience, which the Divine law requires at our hands, and that consequently his law is holy, just, and good: and he who believes that God the Son, the express image of the Father, became incarnate, and died to do honour to the divine law, was set forth to be a propitiation to declare his Father's righteousness, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of the believer: and he who believes that God the Holy Ghost, is appointed to be an enlightener and sanctifier, to bring sinners to understand the truth, see it in its glory, believe, love, and obey it: he who understands and believes these points, cannot fail to understand and believe all the rest. For all doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion, natively results from these fundamental truths.—Besides,

These fundamental truths give light to each other. So that if once the glory of God, the supreme governor of the world, is seen, the reason and nature of his law will be plain. And if that is plain, the design of the incarnation and death of the Son of God will be evident. And then the whole Gospel-plan will naturally open to view, and appear to contain a complete system of religious sentiments, harmonious and consistent throughout, perfect in glory and beauty. And while we discern the opposition of this system of truths to every vicious bias in the human mind, the nature and necessity of the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, to bring us rightly to understand the Gospel, see it in its glory, and love and practise it, will be easily discerned: And at the same time, every one, well acquainted with his own heart, may discern the true source of all the various errors which have been broached in the Christian world: For the root of them all is in the heart of every child of Adam.

To assist the candid inquisitive reader to look down into the bottom of truth and error, and see things in their original sources, and in their mutual connexions, that the true Scripture scheme may rise into clear view, and the first spring of all the chief errors now in vogue may be clearly discerned, is the design of the following sheets.

The reasonings are not built upon here and there a Scripture text, detached from its connexion with its context, to carry away the reader's mind with the mere sound of words; rather all the reasonings are at bottom founded on Scripture facts, viewed in a Scripture light; facts which cannot be denied without giving up our baptism, and overthrowing Christianity by wholesale.—And a chief design is, to lead all parties, if they will but attend to the subject, to see that the great doctrines of the Gospel are not disputable points; yea, so far from it, that there is no consistent medium between the ancient apostolic Christianity and infidelity.

The subject is noble, the design is good, the execution, far as it is from being equal to so noble a subject, is presented to the candid reader's critical perusal and mature judgment. With a becoming generosity overlook the blemishes of the manner; with the greatest eagerness attend to the matter, seek the truth, search for it as for silver, dig for it as for hid treasure, neither believe nor disbelieve but in exact proportion to evidence: *To the law and to the testimony,* like the *noble Bereans.*

N. B. The reader may be advertised, that, some time after this Essay was begun, Mr. Cudworth's further defence of Theron and Aspasio came to hand, some remarks upon which are therefore inserted here and there in the margin, so far as appears needful to clear and establish the truth.

March 11, 1762.

INTRODUCTION.

Containing an invitation to study the Gospel of Christ; as it gives the most glorious display of all the divine perfections, that ever was made.

THE first, and fundamental pinciple of all religion, natural and revealed, is this, viz. That there is a GOD, an absolutely perfect, and infinitely glorious and amiable BEING. And it is universally agreed to, by all who believe the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, that this God is the Creator of all things: that in the beginning he created the heavens and the earth; and that by him were created all things that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible, and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him. And if there is a God, an absolutely perfect Being; and if he created all things, then all things are his, by an original, entire, underived, independent right. And if so, it must of course naturally belong to him to take care of his own world, to order and dispose all events according to his pleasure. And the whole of his conduct in the government of the universe must be, of necessity, like himself, perfect in wisdom, glory, and beauty: worthy to be admired and rejoiced in, by all created intelligences. And if all God's works are glorious, much more must the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, the CHIEF, by far the chief of all his works, exceed in glory.

It is evident from the whole tenour of Scripture, that, as God is by nature invisible, one whom no eye hath seen or can see, and into whose essence no created intelligence can look; so one chief design of all his works is to manifest himself, to exhibit the clearest and completest representation of all his perfections; and particularly, to hold forth to the view of the intellectual system, the most lively image of his heart, of his moral perfections. That, as it is above the capacity of finite intelligences to look immediately into his heart, and discern how he views things, and is affected towards them; they might hereby be enabled to form right conceptions of his nature, and so under advantages to behold his infinite,

incomprehensible glory, so far as their finite capacities will admit.

The visible creation, the heavens and the earth, the sun, moon, and stars, with all the laws, order, and harmony, in the natural system, as they are specimens of the Almighty power, infinite wisdom and goodness; so they may be considered as a designed manifestation of these perfections, as inanimate pictures of the invisible glories of the invisible God. But if we turn our eyes off from the material world, the meanest part of God's creation, to the view of holy intelligences, who were in a peculiar sense, made after the image of God, here we shall behold living images of the living God. But still all this is finite, the inanimate pictures and the living images are finite; but God himself is absolutely infinite. These representations, therefore, are very scanty, very deficient; and but a small portion of God can be known by them. Wherefore infinite wisdom hath laid a plan, in which he himself, as it were, may cease to be invisible, may come out to the view of the intellectual system in all his glory, in the person of Jesus Christ his Son, who is the image of the invisible God, even the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. The vail is rent; the holy of holies is exposed to public view, and the glory of the Lord is to be seen by saints on earth, and principalities and powers in heaven, in the face of Jesus Christ. This manifestation therefore of God, in and by Jesus Christ, which is called the Gospel, is the completest and brightest exhibition of all the divine perfections that ever was, or that, (perhaps,) ever will be made. The inspired apostle might well then call the Gospel THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. As beyond all doubt the glory of the work of our redemption by Christ, exceeds, far exceeds in glory, not only the glorious works of men, or more glorious works of angels; but even exceeds in glory, all the other glorious works of God himself.

While, therefore, men of the greatest genius think themselves well employed in contemplating the laws, order, and harmony, of the natural world, let us now, with the greatest attention and ardour, join with principalities and powers in heaven, in prying into the glorious mysteries of God's moral

system, all pre-supposed or implied in the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And the rather, because it is possible, that while we live under the clear light of the Gospel, we may be blind to all its peculiar glories; and so never believe it to be true, nor reap any saving benefit from it; but be finally lost; eternally lost. For, as Saint Paul observes, *if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* Wherefore, while we search into the nature and glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, let us pray, that *he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, would shine in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* That *we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord.* 2 Cor. iii. 18. and iv. 3, 4, 5.

In these words of the apostle just cited, to which a special reference will be had in the following Essay, these things may be observed: That the Gospel of Christ, is a glorious Gospel—That the glory of the Gospel is seen by all who sit under it, that are not blind; and all who see its glory do believe, savingly believe—That those who are blind to the glory of the Gospel, do not believe it; the Gospel is hid from them, and they are lost—That the devil's grand scheme is to keep men blind to the glory of the Gospel; as knowing, that this is the direct method to prevent their ever believing it, to the saving of their souls—That spiritual illumination, whereby men are brought to see the glory of the Gospel, to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, is as immediately from God, as was natural light, when God commanded the light to shine out of darkness; saying, *let there be light, and there was light*—That all who behold this glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image.

These propositions are expressly declared, or plainly implied, in the words of the apostle. Wherefore let us inquire into the nature and glory of the Gospel of Christ; into the nature and consequences of spiritual blindness; and into the nature and effects of divine illumination.

AN ESSAY,

&c.

SECTION I.

A general view of the nature of the Gospel.

THE word Gospel, signifies GOOD NEWS. The good news comes from heaven; from GOD, the great king of the universe. It was first more darkly hinted to Adam immediately after the fall; and afterwards to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by God himself; and by Moses and all the Prophets in God's name, to Israel of old. But last of all, the whole glorious plan was fully brought to light, and published to the world, by Jesus Christ and his apostles.

And he, who will be at the pains carefully and critically to read the bible through, and take a full view of the whole account as it there stands, will find the following particulars, among many others, implied in the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.

1. That God is considered as the moral governor of the world; that man is considered as a proper subject of moral government; that God's law is considered as holy, just, and good; that man has broken it, is without excuse, stands guilty before God, already condemned; and is so far from penitence, that he is dead in sin, an enemy to God, and at enmity against his law and government.

2. That God did not judge it suitable to the honour of his majesty, or agreeable to the honour of his law and government, in a sovereign way, by the influences of his holy spirit, to bring man to repentance, and then by a sovereign act of grace to pardon him, and receive him to favour, and entitle him to eternal life, without a Mediator and an atonement.

3. That God has appointed his own Son to be a Mediator; and made him a curse, to redeem us from the curse, that through him he might communicate the holy spirit: and set

him forth to be a propitiation, that through faith in his blood, we might receive forgiveness of sins; and yet God be just, and the honour of his law be secured in the sight of all worlds.

So that the doctrine of Christ's atonement, considered in its antecedents, effects, and consequences, is the sum and substance of the Gospel. This is the good news, that *God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish; but have everlasting life.* John iii. 16. And therefore St. Paul sums up all in these words, *Christ crucified,* 1 Cor. 1. 23. *Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* 1 Cor. ii. 2. and sometimes merely in *the cross of Christ.* Gal. vi. 14. Yea, in that one word, *the cross,* 1 Cor. i. 18.

When the Gospel was first published to fallen man, it was in words to this effect; *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.* But how *bruise the serpent's head?* It was not then a proper time to declare in express language, but sacrifices were instituted to show how, by way of emblematical representation, as they were types and shadows of the great atonement. Abel sacrificed, Noah sacrificed, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob offered sacrifice; and almost the whole external worship of God, under the Mosaic dispensation, which was designed as an introduction to Christianity, consisted in offering sacrifice; and *without shedding of blood there was no remission.* And the meaning of all this was made plain, when the Son of God became incarnate, that *through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil: and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.* Heb. ii. 14, 15.

How had the devil the power of death? It was the devil's original design to be the death and destruction of all the human race, perhaps, that in the ruin of God's new-made world, he might be revenged for his expulsion out of heaven. He thought that if they sinned, they must inevitably die, according to the express declaration of God's law. He had lately felt the force of the divine law he was under. He sinned, and he was banished from the celestial regions, down to eter-

nal wo and endless despair. He tempted man to sin, that he might be joined in the same state. For if God will be so severe as to kill and damn for the first offence, satan's practice seemed to declare, that he could wish God might have nothing else to do among all his subjects. So that when a fallen world was doomed to death, it was the very thing satan would have. And so death became, as it were, his servant. It served his will, it accomplished his scheme, and answered his ends, as though it had been in his power. God seemed obliged in honour to put his law in execution! but in doing of it, he would gratify the devil, the greatest enemy to God, to law, and to the whole system. This was satan's malicious crafty scheme, and thus perhaps was he ready to say, "If law is put in execution, man must die; and God will be disappointed of the glory of his new creation, and I shall triumph. If law is vacated and set aside in favour of rebel man, no more let the Almighty monarch pretend to impartial justice. As well might law have been set aside in my case: my exclusion from heaven was an arbitrary act: if arbitrary, then tyrannical. And what care I for the wrath of an angry tyrant? Hell will be no longer hell to me." Wherefore, there was a peculiar propriety in the first promise being delivered to man in the form of a threatening to satan. *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.* For it was a chief design of infinite wisdom to disconcert the devil's scheme, break up his plan, and so kill the old serpent in a way suited to his own nature. And what can excruciate him more, and put him to greater torment, than to see law honoured, and man saved, both at once; and an eternal end put to his influence, in a way most honourable to God, and advantageous to the system: whilst himself and all his obstinate adherents are doomed to everlasting fire.

But how can law be honoured, and man saved, both at once? For this end Christ became incarnate, and placed himself in our room and stead, that *through death he might destroy the devil,* break up his scheme, set at liberty his guilty trembling captives, *who through fear of death are all their life-time subject to bondage.* For he was *made a curse to redeem us from the curse of the law: set forth to be a propitiation, to*

declare God's righteousness, that *God might be*, and appear to be, *just*, while he justifies the sinner; and so the law *be magnified and made honourable*, while the sinner is saved; death turned into a blessing, and be succeeded by a glorious resurrection, and a blessed immortality.

And thus the design of Christ's death, was to secure the honour of the divine government, and open a way for the honourable exercise of his grace in the salvation of sinners. And this is so plainly held forth in the whole of divine revelation, that it is, at least in words, generally agreed to by almost all parties, however differently they profess to think in many other points. In words, I say, for if in reality it was agreed to, all parties would soon agree in every other important article of the Christian faith.

It is true, there are some divines, who seem to think, that God might arbitrarily have set aside his law in favour of fallen man; and that even his own perfections obliged him to it; and to pardon and receive to favour his sinful creatures upon their repentance, had there never been a mediator or an atonement. Repentance and reformation was all the atonement they could make, and all that God could demand. "I affirm," says one, "it is an article of natural religion, that forgiveness does certainly follow repentance. If God be a merciful and benign being, he will accept the payment we are able to make; and not insist on impossible demands with his frail bankrupt creatures [m]."

But little do such divines think how their confident affirmations are really subversive of the whole of Christianity. For *if there had been a law, which could have given life, verily righteousness had been by the law.* Gal. iii. 21. If it had been "an article of natural religion" that any doings of ours could have in reason entitled us to the divine favour, verily God would have proceeded with mankind upon the principles of natural religion, and not needlessly have been at such infinite expense, as the sacrifice of his Son. For if upon the principles of natural religion, sinful man could obtain the favour of God, the death of Christ was unnecessary. Gal. ii.

[m] Mr. Nye, Natural and Revealed Religion, p. 85, 86.

12. *If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

As this is Saint Paul's reasoning, who certainly had a right understanding of Christianity; so it not only confutes such affirmations as that just mentioned, which are cited and improved by deistical writers [n] in the cause of infidelity: but also at the same time, these words of the apostle precisely determine what it was that rendered the death of Christ necessary, in order to the justification and salvation of sinners. *The law was weak through the flesh,* (Rom. vii. 3.) i. e. through our depravity; and although originally *ordained to give life,* (Rom. vii. 10.) was now unable to do it. For the law required perfect obedience on pain of eternal damnation; as it is written, *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them.* Gal. iii. 10. But *all have sinned,* and so the *whole world stand guilty before God,* according to the law, which all the world are under. Rom. iii. 9. 19. This law, therefore, which was ordained to life, can now be only *unto death.* Rom. vii. 10. And there is no other law. So there is no law which can give life. This rendered the obedience and atonement of Christ absolutely necessary in order to prevent the universal ruin of the human race. For the law being *holy, just, and good,* (Rom. vii. 12.) must not be set aside. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the law must fail; it must be all fulfilled.* Mat. v. 17, 18. Could men have answered the demands of the law, Christ's obedience and death had been needless. *For if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain.* So that this was the end of Christ's death, and that, but for which he never would have died, his death being needless and in vain on any other account, according to Saint Paul.

It is true, the divine and holy manner in which he went through his sufferings, exhibits a glorious example for all his disciples to follow, when they are called to go through sufferings in his cause. But as there would be no virtue in exposing ourselves to death, when not called to it; so there could be no virtue in going through death in ever so heroic a man-

[n] Tindal. p. 354.

ner in such a case. Rather it might be judged, that we fling away our lives, not only imprudently, but very sinfully. And our example would be so far from deserving to be admired and imitated, that it ought to be publicly condemned; to the end that others might hear and fear, and do no more so wickedly. If, therefore, our Saviour laid down his life, when there was no need of it, there was no virtue in his conduct, nothing commendable in his example, nor worthy of imitation; but the whole was a scene of deliberate wickedness. But thus it is written, and thus the all-wise God, whose judgment is always according to truth, viewed the affair, viz. *If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

To say, "that although righteousness does come by the law, yet Christ did not die in vain, as his death was needful to seal his testimony to the truth, as other martyrs have done," is not only expressly to contradict the Holy Ghost, (Gal. xi. 21.) but is even an affront to common sense. Other martyrs were sinners, and deserved to die; for death is the wages of sin: but he was innocent, and holy to perfection. And had he *called for twelve legions of angels*, and out of his enemies' hands ascended to heaven in visible glory, it had been a sufficient attestation to the truths he taught, had he only been a prophet sent from God to republish the law of nature. *But how then should the Scriptures have been fulfilled*, which had marked him out for a sacrifice of atonement, *to make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness.* For he was, according to the plan laid in heaven, intimated in the sacred writings, to be *wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was to be upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed: For we all like sheep had gone astray, and the Lord had laid on him the iniquities of us all.* Isai. liii. On this design, the Son of God became incarnate, and for this purpose he died; and had it not been for this, the death of an incarnate God had been entirely needless. For thus heaven has declared, *if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

Well therefore might the holy apostle sum up the whole of the glorious Gospel in one word, *We preach Christ crucified:* For indeed this was in effect the whole of the good and glori-

ous news they had to proclaim to a guilty world. It was long before decreed in heaven, that he should die; it was *the determinate counsel of God,* from the beginning, that *through death he should destroy the devil,* break up his scheme, and thoroughly *bruise his head.* And for this, in the fulness of time, he left his father's bosom. For this he *became flesh;* and for this he entered upon his public ministry, characterized by *John the Baptist,* at that juncture, the *Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world:* the true antitype of all the Jewish sacrifices. For this he called the *twelve* from their nets, that they might be his witnesses to all nations. For this he went up to Jerusalem, knowing what should befall him; *and how am I straitened,* said he, *till it be accomplished.* For this he went into the garden, knowing that his enemies would find him there; and in a view of the absolute necessity of his death for the salvation of sinners, he said to his Father, *thy will be done:* and then voluntarily resigned himself up into his enemies' hands, when he could have struck them dead, or had twelve legions of angels to have guarded him from their malice. *I lay down my life for the sheep. This commandment have I received from my Father.* For him did God the Father *set forth to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just.* And for this the Father *loved him, because he laid down his life for the sheep.* And to testify his love and well-pleasedness in the sight of the whole intellectual system, he raised him from the dead, set him at his own right hand in heaven, declared himself ready to be reconciled, and ordered repentance and remission of sins to be preached to all nations in his name. Nay, all power in heaven and earth is committed into his hands, that he might reign till all his enemies are put under his feet, and satan's whole scheme completely disappointed. For as he *loved righteousness and hated iniquity* with such fervour, as moved him to interpose and die in this cause, to discountenance sin, and magnify the divine law, bring glory to God, salvation to men, and so destroy the devil; wherefore God hath *anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows.* Heb. i. 9. *Given him a name above every name.* Phil. ii. 9. And decreed, that *he should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.* (Isai.

liii. 11.) That is, see as much glory to God and benefit to the creature, result from his death on the cross, as his soul desires.

Was his love to God, zeal for his glory, and for the honour of his government, and compassion to lost sinners, so great, as to bring him from his Father's bosom, worshipped by all the heavenly host, to hang naked, tortured, insulted on the cross, and there expire in the utmost agonies! As great glory to God, as great honour to his law, as great salvation to lost sinners shall result herefrom, as to be equal to his love, and zeal, and pity, infinite as they were. For *he shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.* He shall see the fruit of his labours till he says *it is enough.* But what can be enough in the eyes of such an one! What can satisfy a heart like his! whose regard to the honour of God and of his law, and to the welfare of lost sinners, was so infinitely great! *Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive!* But in the midst of all this, we have the highest possible assurance of his sincerity in saying, *Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;* (John vi. 37.) for these the Father gave him; they were the sheep he loved, and *laid down his life for; the joy set before him,* for whose salvation *he endured the cross and despised the shame;* these are *his seed,* the *travail of his soul,* for whom he *was smitten of God,* and in whose stead he became *a curse, to redeem them from the curse, and that the blessing of Abraham might come upon them.*

Thus this is the sum and substance of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. *We preach Christ crucified:* this was the glorious and joyful news the apostles proclaimed to a revolted, guilty world. And if to the Jews Christ crucified was a *stumbling-block,* and to the Greeks *foolishness;* yet to them who were CALLED, Christ crucified was *the power of God and the wisdom of God.*—But this leads us to take a view of the glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

SECTION II.

A general view of the glory of the Gospel.

THE Gospel is denominated *the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ*; and its glory is represented to be *divine glory*. For it is called *the glory of God, and the glory of the Lord*. 2 Cor. iii. 18. Chap. iv. 6. The law, as a *ministration of death* and *condemnation*, is said to be *glorious*; but the Gospel *exceeds in glory*, (2 Cor. iii. 7. 10.) because we have in the Gospel a more full and bright manifestation of the glory of the divine nature. The glory of both is of the same nature, divine glory; but in the Gospel it shines with greater brightness. Now the glory of the divine nature consists in infinite wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. These perfections are the beauty of the divinity. But how are they manifested in the Gospel?—It is true, the ends proposed in the Gospel are very glorious, to bring glory to God, salvation to men, and destruction to satan's cause. But how are the means glorious?—*Christ crucified*. How are the divine perfections manifested in bringing about these ends by the incarnation and death of the Son of God? This has been a *stumbling-block to the Jew*, and *foolishness to the Greek*; and yet is affirmed to be in an eminent and peculiar manner *the wisdom of God*. But how and wherein does the wisdom of God appear in the death of his Son? This is the point to which we are now carefully to attend.

It has been observed that the death of Christ was designed to answer the demands of the law in our stead. The law had said, *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*. But by the deeds of this law *no flesh can be justified in the sight of God*; for by it all stand condemned as sinners. Therefore Christ *was made a curse to redeem us from its curse*: not because it was a bad law; and so the fault in the law-giver; but because the law was holy, just, and good, and mankind without excuse, guilty before God, as much to blame as the curse of the law imported. He was *set forth to be a propitiation to declare God's*

righteousness; and so in his death he *magnified the law and made it honourable.* Isai. xlii. 21. But there is no wisdom in doing honour to that which is not worthy of honour. And therefore,

If the divine law was not holy, just, and good, and did not in its own nature deserve to be magnified and made honourable at such an infinite expense as the blood of the Son of God, how was it wise in God to give his Son to die for this purpose? And if it was not wise, how was the divine conduct in this affair in any respect Godlike and glorious? If it was not wise, it was unwise. It must be unwise to be at such infinite expense, if the nature of the case did not call for it, if the law did not deserve such honour. And if there was no need of such an atonement in order to our pardon and salvation, it was no act of kindness to us. We might have been saved as well without. And if the law was in its own nature too severe, it could not be a holy or a just act in God to require such an atonement in order to our pardon and salvation; but the contrary.

It must therefore be laid down as a fundamental maxim, that the divine law in its full extent, and with all its curses, and that with respect not only to Adam in innocency, but also to all his sinful race, in whose stead Christ has borne its curse, is really, in itself, and in the eyes of God, holy, just, and good, glorious and amiable, worthy of having its honour secured by the blood of the Son of God. For there can be no glory in the death of Christ, if the law be not glorious.—Rather, it must have been contrary to all the divine perfections for God to have given his Son to die, to do honour to that which deserved no honour. And the Gospel which brings us the news, instead of revealing the glory of God, would bring to light an affair infinitely and everlastingly to his dishonour.—For,

How must it appear in the eyes of all holy beings, if the law was good only with respect to Adam before the fall, but not with respect to him or his posterity since; that Christ should be made a curse, to redeem not only Adam, but to redeem *us* from the curse. That Christ should die to make atonement not only for the one offence of Adam, his first sin,

but the MANY offences of Adam and of his sinful race; even for every breach of that law, which curseth every one, that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them. If the law had not been in its full extent, holy, just and good, with respect to a fallen world, surely a being of perfect rectitude and infinite goodness, must have disannulled it, and not subjected his own Son, in our stead, to bear the curse.

If indeed we are a fallen, sinful, guilty world, (and if we are not, we did not need the Son of God to die in our behalf,) it is not at all strange, if there should be many and great prejudices in our hearts against the divine law, which we have broke, and by which we stand condemned, blinding our minds to its reasonableness and excellency, and tempting us to think it far from being holy, just, and good. Nor is it at all strange, if satan, who was banished from heaven by a like law, and is an avowed enemy to God and to his government, should desire to strengthen our prejudices against the divine law, and do all in his power to blind our minds, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine in our hearts. But only let our hearts be divested of prejudices, and in a disposition to approve that which is really excellent, and we cannot fail to discern the reasonableness and beauty of the divine law. For,

If God is an absolutely perfect being, (and to deny that he is, is downright atheism,) he must be infinitely glorious and amiable in himself: and therefore he must be infinitely worthy of that supreme love and honour, from all the children of men, which the law requires. And infinite worthiness lays a foundation for infinite obligation: and infinite obligation to love and honour God supremely, will render us infinitely to blame if we do not: and infinite blame deserves infinite punishment: exactly as the divine law, that perfect rule of right, has stated the case. And the more disinclined we be to love God, the more aggravated is our guilt: and if our inclination to love God with all our hearts is what it ought to be, there can be no difficulty in the way. So that there is no consistent medium between atheism, and an acknowledgment that the divine law is holy, just and good *. And further,

* If God is not an absolutely perfect being, in himself infinitely glorious and

If this absolutely perfect, infinitely glorious being, who is by nature God, is the creator and preserver of all things; if he brought all things out of nothing into being, and holds up all things in being every moment; then all things are absolutely and entirely his, by an original, independent right. And if all things are his, he has a natural right of government over all. And it becomes him to take the throne, and be king in his own world. Supreme authority naturally belongs to him, exactly as the divine law supposes.

When therefore he takes the throne, assumes the character

amiable, the divine law, which requires us to love him with all our hearts on pain of eternal death, can never be made out to be holy, just, and good. And if the law is not holy, just, and good, the wisdom of God in the death of his Son can never be vindicated. The Gospel must be given up. He, then, who denies the infinite amiableness of the Deity, as he is in himself, saps the whole Scripture-scheme at the foundation. He must be an infidel; or, if he pretends to believe Christianity, he must hold to a scheme full of inconsistence. We have an instance of this in Mr. Cudworth. He denies the infinite amiableness of the Deity, as he is in himself; and maintains, that there is "no loveliness conceivable" in him, but what results from his being our friend, "disposed to make us happy." When, therefore, we had made him our enemy by sin, he maintains, that there was no loveliness to be seen in him: yea, that let our hearts be ever so right, it was "utterly impossible" to love him; even inconsistent with our original constitution as reasonable creatures. The divine law, surely, then, could not in reason be obligatory on a fallen world: it became a bad law, not fit for us to be under, as soon as ever we broke it: which to say, he owns, is subversive of Christianity. What then shall we say? To say, that the law is "holy, just, and good," when it requires of us what is "inconsistent with the original constitution of reasonable creatures," is the most glaring, shocking self-contradiction. But into this Mr. Cudworth is necessarily driven, by his denying God to be, in himself, an infinitely amiable Being. For if God is not a lovely Being, when we have made him our enemy by sin; yea, if his very displeasure against us as sinners, is not a lovely thing, he never can be loved by us. If to hate and punish sin, is in God an unamiable thing, there is no beauty at all in his character, as will be proved in the sequel. If Mr. Cudworth will re-consider his own scheme, and with a sedate, impartial mind, look to the bottom of things, he will find himself obliged to alter his notion of God, or give up Christianity. And if he should grant, that God is, in himself, infinitely amiable, all his objections against my Dialogues must drop of course. For as soon as the sinner's eyes are, in regeneration, opened to see things as they be, God will appear to be infinitely amiable: and then every consequence will follow, which, I say, does follow. He was sensible of this; and so had no way left but to deny, that God is, in himself, infinitely amiable; in which he has destroyed the only foundation on which a consistent scheme of religion can be built, and obliged himself to run into inconsistence and self-contradiction. See Mr. Cudworth's further Defence, p. 221. 226.

of moral Governor, requires all the human race to *love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their strength, and with all their mind,* on pain of his displeasure, to be testified in their being eternally forsaken of God and given up to ruin, he does what perfectly becomes him. His conduct is founded in the highest reason. For he is by nature God, and the original Lord of all things.

And had all the human kind, in mutual love and perfect harmony among themselves, (as also the divine law requires,) joined with one heart and with one soul, in a supreme love to the supreme beauty, and in an entire, cordial, joyful subjection to their Creator and supreme Lord, and absolutely perfect sovereign; and continued universally obedient to all the dictates of his will, which must for ever have been infinitely wise; they might, as one united, harmonious, happy family, have always dwelt under the shadow of his wings, enjoyed his favour, his smiles, his blessing, and made eternal progress in all divine improvements, rejoicing ever before him, to his honour, and infinitely to their own advantage. And all this was but the very thing the divine law was in its own nature calculated to bring them to: for *the law was ordained to life.* Wherefore *the law was holy, just, and good;* and a glorious expression of the holiness, justice, and goodness of the divine nature, the very image of the deity. And therefore it was worthy to be kept in honour by God's own Son. Besides,

When in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth in six days, and all things that are in heaven and in the earth, visible, and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, he then created all things for himself, with a view to begin a moral kingdom, comprehending all holy intelligences, and to set up a moral government to last for ever and ever; the welfare of which must consist in, and result from, the knowledge and love of God, and mutual love and harmony under his perfect government. That is, in such tempers, employments, and enjoyments, as the divine law was calculated to train them up unto. And as this holy kingdom was so large, comprehending all holy intelligences; and of such great duration, to last for ever and ever; its interest and welfare was, strictly speaking,

of infinite value. It was therefore of infinite importance, not only as to the honour of God, but also as to the good of his great and eternal kingdom, that the honour and authority of that law should be maintained inviolate, which secured the rights and prerogatives of the Godhead, and the infinitely valuable privileges of all his subjects.

To break this law, in its native tendency, was to dethrone God and disband his empire, to introduce universal rebellion, discord, and ruin into God's eternal kingdom. And had the first rebel had sufficient power and influence on his side, he would actually have dethroned God and disbanded his empire, introduced universal rebellion, discord, and ruin, into God's eternal kingdom. Yea, this is the native tendency of every sin, and the heart of every sinner, as I have largely shown in another place [p]. Therefore, to crush rebellion; to brand sin with eternal infamy; to establish the divine authority; to maintain the divine law in all its honours, were things of infinite importance, not only to the honour of God, but also to the welfare of his great and eternal kingdom.

Therefore, when satan and his adherents first began rebellion in heaven, although dear to God before their fall, yet love to being in general, love to God and to the created system, love to law, to virtue, to order, and harmony, awakened infinite wrath in the Almighty against the rebels; excommunicated them from the Church of the first-born above; banished them from that holy society, and doomed them to eternal darkness and wo: that sin might be pictured in all its infinite horrors in the hearts of all his loyal subjects above, that the infection might never spread in that world, but the honour of his authority, law, and government, be more firmly established than ever, to the glory of his name, and to the everlasting interest of his great and eternal kingdom. And all heaven had reason to cry, AMEN, HALLELUJAH: *Just and righteous are thy ways, Lord God Almighty.*

And if after this, rebellion breaks out in another part of God's dominions, is there less, nay, is there not rather greater reason, that sin should be equally discountenanced? Or rather,

[p] Sermon on the great evil of Sin.

that some more effectual method than ever should be entered upon to establish the divine authority, and secure the honour of the divine government? Or must the divine law now be given up in favour of rebel MAN, even as the devil made our first parents believe it would, when he tempted them to revolt, saying, *ye shall not surely die*. Let us stop and think a moment, what would be the import of giving up the law in this case.

The law supposed, that God was really by nature God, an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious Being, as it required us to consider and treat him as such. Our revolt was a practical declaration, that he was not by nature God, nor worthy to be glorified as God. To give up the law in favour of his rebellious creature, must therefore be the same, in effect, as for God to give up his own divinity, and ungod himself, in the sight of all his dominions, to gratify a rebel. —Again,

The law also supposed, that as God was the Creator, Lord and owner of the universe, and by nature God; so he was possessed of supreme authority, an authority infinitely binding, and infinitely worthy to be revered. To give up the law, therefore, was in effect the same as to resign his authority in favour of those who had despised it, give a quit-claim of the universe, and tolerate a general revolt. As if God should say, "The universe is not mine, nor have I any authority over it; angels, men, and devils, are all at liberty: there is no king, and so every one may do what is right in his own eyes." For, to hold his authority merely on the foot of the voluntary loyalty of his subjects, so that whenever any revolt, they are at liberty, no longer obliged to obey; to do this only in one instance, is in effect to relinquish all claim to authority over any, as founded in his Godhead and Lordship; which is, in effect, the same as quit his claim to his own divinity and to his own world, to gratify those who would gladly ungod him and dethrone him. In a word, for God to give up the law, which requires us to love and obey him with all our hearts, is practically to declare to his rebellious creatures, "Your disaffection to my character, and rebellion against my authority, is no crime: for I am not

worthy to be loved and obeyed with all your hearts: for I am not by nature God, an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, your Creator, sovereign Lord and King, as in my law I claimed to be." And,

To alter and abate the law, and bring it down to the taste and good-liking of an apostate world, who were enemies to God and his government, enemies to the order and harmony of the universe, must be much the same, as for God to give up his law and authority entirely. For he must quit his supremacy, give up the rights and honours of the Godhead, justify their revolt, turn to be on their side, turn enemy to God, and to his law, and employ his infinite wisdom and almighty power, to promote the schemes they have laid in consequence of their revolt; schemes suited to the taste of apostate creatures. And thus they must become *as gods*, as satan said, and the Almighty become their true and faithful servant. For nothing short of this would suit an apostate world. But this is even worse than merely to quit his claim to the universe, and resign his government over it. As it would be bad for king George to quit his throne for the Pretender, and fly his country; but worse to become the Pretender's servant, and be obliged to employ all his power to promote the Pretender's interest.

And if among God's revolted subjects, any of the rebels should imagine that what the devil said was true, *ye shall not surely die:* if any should persuade themselves, that it never was in God's heart to care at all for his own honour, or for the honour of his law and government, or to punish any of his creatures, for *despising the Lord*, and *despising the commandments of the Lord;* or ever to inflict any pain upon any of his subjects, unless merely for their benefit: in a word, if any should imagine, that it never was in God's heart to regard or aim at any thing but simply the good of his creatures, be they virtuous or vicious; and believing God to be thus altogether according to their own hearts, they are well pleased with his character; and so verily think that they are not enemies to God, in a state of rebellion, worthy of eternal death: and consequently, that they do not need a pardon, much less an atonement of infinite value, to procure a pardon.

All this is so far from arguing an atonement to be needless, that it rather serves to discover the absolute necessity of one; that God might give no occasion for these false and blasphemous notions of him and his government, universally to prevail, infinitely to the dishonour of God, and entirely to the subversion of his authority, while he is on designs of mercy towards a fallen world.

It is manifest from the whole tenour of the divine conduct, from the foundation of the world, that he looked upon it as of the highest importance, that the intellectual system should know that the Deity is infinitely worthy of supreme love and universal obedience, and that the evil of disaffection and rebellion against the divine majesty is infinitely great, and worthy of an infinite punishment: as he is in fact by nature God, and Lord supreme. It therefore appeared in the eyes of God, a glorious act, and infinitely becoming the wise Father of the universe, originally to suspend the everlasting welfare of his new-made, innocent creatures, on condition of their supreme love to the Deity, to be manifested by a universal obedience to his will. And he judged it wise and righteous in him, as moral governor of the world, to banish the first rebels from his presence into everlasting destruction. And in his eyes it was a most glorious display of all his perfections, when man had fallen, not to pardon one of all the race without a Mediator of infinite dignity, and an atonement of infinite value: nay, rather to part with his own Son from his bosom, and deliver him up to bear the curse in our stead, and set him forth to be a propitiation to declare his righteousness, and let the whole system see his full resolution to punish sin, and maintain the honour of his law and government. And in this view, *Christ crucified* is the *wisdom of God:* a most glorious means to accomplish the most glorious ends. And in this primarily consists the glory of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It was a glorious display of the holiness of the great governor of the world, to appoint his own Son to die a sacrifice of atonement, as hereby his infinite regard to his own honour, and infinite hatred of sin, was set in the strongest light.

And it was a glorious display of the divine justice, as here-

by it appeared, that he was unchangeably determined to punish sin according to its desert, and execute the curse of his righteous law, although his own dear Son, standing in the room of a guilty world, was the person to be made a curse.

And it was a glorious display of divine goodness; for if the divine law was so holy, just, and good, so exactly in the image of the Deity, as to be worthy of all this honour; then, to a demonstration, God was wholly right, and our disaffection and rebellion entirely groundless; yea, infinitely criminal. And therefore mankind were not pitied as having been too severely dealt with. And while the death of Christ declares the justice of the law, and the righteousness of God in our condemnation, the gift of Christ to die in our stead, appears to be an act of grace, infinitely great, and absolutely free.

And while the Son of God stands clothed in human nature, and voluntarily appears as our representative, to die in our stead, as our second Adam, God appears to be a God of truth. For the criminal dies virtually in his surety. And thus the law is honoured, sin discountenanced, the sinner saved, grace glorified, and satan disappointed, all at once. And thus all the divine perfections are displayed on the cross of Christ. And thus the Gospel is a glorious Gospel. But all this only on supposition the law was a glorious law.—For,

Let it once be supposed, that the divine law, which required sinless perfection on pain of eternal damnation of all mankind, is in its own nature too severe, and it will inevitably follow, (heaven forbid the blasphemy!) that Christ in bearing the curse of this law in our stead, died a sacrifice to tyranny: and so the Gospel, instead of being a glorious Gospel, a glorious display of the wisdom, holiness, justice, and goodness of the divine nature, exhibits to view the most shocking scene that can possibly be conceived of: foolishness in the abstract.

But if the law was holy, just, and good, glorious and amiable, and worthy to be so magnified and made honourable, and if the law be thus viewed and considered; at once the atonement of Christ becomes *the wisdom of God and the power of God*, the wisest and the most effectual method to answer the most glorious ends. And thus the cross of Christ will ap-

pear *foolishness*, or *wisdom*, according to the light in which we view it. As it is written, (1 Cor. i. 23, 24.) *We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

Thus we have taken a general view of the nature and glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And the way being thus prepared, we proceed to take things into a more particular consideration in the following sections.

SECTION III.

The Divine law holy, just, and good, a glorious law antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, and the work of redemption by him.

IF the moral character of the deity, which consists in holiness, justice, and goodness, is glorious and amiable; and if the divine law is after his own image, a transcript of his nature, holy, just, and good, it must be glorious and amiable too. And that the divine law is holy, just, and good, the apostle Paul expressly affirms in the seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans, ver. 12.

Would we know what law the apostle speaks of in that verse, let us read through that epistle, and his epistle to the Galatians, in which he is speaking of the same law; and we shall find these things said of it. It is that law which the Jews had written in a book, and the Gentiles written in their consciences. It *revealed the wrath of God, from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.* By this law is *the knowledge of sin.* It requires us to *continue in all things in it to do them.* It promises, that *the man that doth the things contained in it shall live.* But *curses every one that continueth not in all things.* And according to it, *both Jews and Greeks are under sin; every mouth is stopped, and the whole world stand guilty before God:* each one *without excuse.* Rom. i. 18. 21. Chap. ii. 14. Chap. iii. 9. 20. Chap. vii.

7. 12. Chap. x. 5. Gal. iii. 10. 12. And from the whole tenour of divine revelation we learn, that it requires us to love God with all our heart, and yield a perfect and persevering obedience to his will, on pain of eternal death.

That this law, with respect to mankind in their present state, is holy, just, and good, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ and the work of redemption by him, is certain from two indisputable facts.

First FACT. That all mankind, in their natural state, are by God, the judge of all the earth, considered as under it, and held bound by it. That this is the case, is plain. For, we cannot be guilty before God for the breach of a law, which in his sight we are not under. But for the breach of this law, the whole world stand guilty before God: therefore the whole world, in the sight of God, are under the law. Rom iii. 19. No man can be entitled to life by obeying a law which he is not under. But whosoever obeys this law is expressly entitled to life; therefore every man is under it. Rom. x. 5. No man is liable in the sight of God to the curse or penalty of a law which he is not held bound by. But God declares, that every Christless sinner is actually under the curse of the law; therefore every Christless sinner is held bound by it. Gal. iii. 10. John iii. 18. 36. Thus the fact is plain, that all mankind, in their natural state, are, by God the Judge of all the earth, considered as under it, and held bound by it. But from the absolute perfection of the divine nature, we may be certain that the Judge of all the earth cannot but do right. It is inconsistent with the holiness, justice, and goodness of his nature, and therefore morally impossible he should hold his creatures bound by a law, unless it were holy, just, and good. This law is therefore holy, just, and good.

Second FACT. That God has given his own Son, to be made a curse to redeem us from the curse of this law. But it had been inconsistent with every one of the divine perfections, to have given his Son to be made a curse, to redeem us from the curse of a law, which in justice we could not have been held bound by, if Christ had never died.

Whoever will think of this, and thoroughly weigh it in his mind, will feel himself obliged, either to acknowledge

the law to be holy, just, and good, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ; or to give up law and Gospel both together. For God's giving his Son to die, to redeem us from the curse of the law, is the greatest proof of its goodness, which could possibly have been given by the Father or Son. The fact must be denied, therefore, or the consequence must be granted. We must say, that Christ was not made a curse to redeem us from the curse of the law, or we must grant the law was good; for, to say that God the Father gave his Son, to be made a curse, to redeem us from the curse of a bad law, is worse than infidelity; nay, worse than downright atheism. For, to believe that God is an Almighty tyrant, that would put his creatures under an unrighteous law, and then appoint his Son to bear its curse in their room, is worse than to believe there is no God at all. The goodness of the divine law must be granted, therefore, or we shall find no where to stop on this side infidelity. But I mean, at present, to reason only with those who grant the Scriptures to be the word of God. And to these, I presume, the argument must be conclusive. But,

1. If the divine law is holy, just, and good, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, and work of redemption by him; then the divine law is a glorious and amiable law, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, and work of redemption by him. For, if holiness, justice, and goodness, are glorious and amiable attributes, as they are in God, the original; then they are glorious and amiable attributes, as they are in the divine law, which is his image, and a transcript of his nature. If the original is lovely, the image is lovely also. To say otherwise, plainly implies a contradiction. Besides, if holiness, justice, and goodness, are not glorious and amiable properties, then God himself is not a glorious and amiable being. And if God is not a glorious and amiable being, he ought not to be viewed and loved as such. Which to say, is to overthrow natural and revealed religion both at once. There is no consistent medium, therefore, between renouncing all religion, and granting the divine law to be glorious and amiable, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, and work of redemption by him.—But,

2. If the divine law is a holy, just, good, and glorious law, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ; then it must of necessity appear such, to every one whose eyes are opened, to see it as it is: that is, to every one that is not spiritually blind. For if it is in fact a glorious law, in itself, it must appear so to every one who sees it as it is; and it must begin to appear so as soon as it begins to be seen as it is. And he that does not so much as begin to see the divine law as it is, is evidently altogether spiritually blind. God has not as yet begun to open his eyes, but the vail is still all over his heart; and enmity to God and his law has full possession of his soul [q].

To say, "That it is impossible the law should appear glorious to me, before I believe myself delivered from its curse," is either to say, that the law, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, was not a glorious law, or else, that a man whose eyes are opened, cannot possibly see it to be what it is. But if it was not a glorious law, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, it is certain Christ never would have been given to redeem us from its curse. And if men do not see it to be what it is, it is certain they are blind; for this is the very thing that is meant by blindness in this case.

The truth is, those who view the law as being glorious, on-

q These four points must be insisted on: 1st. That the divine law is holy, just, good, and glorious, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ. 2d. That it is seen to be such by every enlightened soul. 3d. That in this view Christ crucified, is seen to be the wisdom of God. 4th. That without this view, the wisdom of God in the death of his Son cannot be seen. But whether the glory of the law is seen, in order of time, before the glory of the atonement, need not be insisted on. If things are seen in their true nature, and in their true arrangement, it matters not whether they come into view gradually or instantaneously. They may, in some instances, come into view gradually, and very distinctly; and in some, as it were, instantaneously, and less distinctly. Some may have a greater degree of spiritual light at first, and others a less degree. Some may have a distinct remembrance of their views and exercises, and others not. It matters not as to these things; if men do but know, and love, and obey the truth in sincerity, they are Christians. But if the truth is hated and opposed, and errors substituted in its room; if the divine law be denied to be glorious; if it fills me with hatred and heart-risings; if my heart-risings are allayed merely in a belief that I am delivered from the curse; if this belief is the only ground of my love and joy, and of all my religion, I am not a Christian; I am an Antinomian; an enemy to the divine law, and to the cross of Christ.

ly under the notion, they are, or shall be delivered from its curse, are as blind to its real beauty, as the most stupid sinner in the world. It is just as if a man should pretend to love a tyrant, merely because he is dead. And although they may be ravished to think Christ died for them, yet the real purport of his death never once came into their view. And had the law in reality been no otherwise than it appears to them, Christ never had died to redeem any man from its curse. For had in not been good and glorious, antecedent to his interposition, he never would have interposed. For he did not die, because the law was bad, to rescue us from its unrighteous curse, and pacify our angry minds: but he died because it was good, to do it honour, and answer its demands in our stead, to the end that God, consistently with his honour, might by his holy spirit, take the vail from our hearts, and bring us to see the glory of his law, and heartily repent of all our hard thoughts of God and of his government, and in this way be forgiven simply on Christ's account, and through faith in his blood. And this is that *repentance toward God*, and *faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*, which Saint Paul preached to the world.

He who never viewed the divine law as glorious and worthy to be magnified and made honourable, never once understood the design of Christ's mediation, or the purport of his death, or the nature of his righteousness and atonement, or saw the glory of the Gospel, or indeed truly knows any thing about the way of salvation through his blood; as will be proved in the sequel.

Objec. "To view the law as glorious, antecedent to a consideration of the grace of the Gospel, implies, that it appears a glorious thing in God to punish sin according to its desert, with application to myself; but this is inconsistent with that principle of self-preservation originally implanted in human nature when innocent: and so in its own nature is impossible; and therefore, cannot be a duty. And therefore, to be blind to the beauty of the divine law, thus viewed, cannot be of a criminal nature.—Nor can I be obliged to look upon the law as glorious, only in consequence of the grace of the Gospel."

Ans. 1. This objection, if there be any weight in it, is sub-

versive of all religion, natural and revealed, in heaven, and on earth. For a disposition to punish sin according to its desert, is an essential part of that character of God which is exhibited in law and Gospel, and in the whole of the divine conduct, from the expulsion of the sinning angels out of heaven, down to the last sentence which will be pronounced on the wicked at the day of judgment. And if, with application to myself, this character does not appear glorious, for the very same reason it cannot appear glorious to me, with application to any other being, if my heart is as it ought to be. For I ought to love my neighbour as myself. And my neighbour's happiness is worth as much as my own, and his eternal misery as dreadful a thing as mine would be. Therefore, if it is inconsistent with that love I owe to myself, to view the divine law as glorious, antecedent to a consideration of the grace of the Gospel, it is also inconsistent with that love I owe to my neighbour. The moment therefore the sinning angels were doomed to eternal misery, it behooved all the angelic world, on this hypothesis, to revolt. Nor could any thing ever reconcile them to the deity, but his delivering satan and his associates from the curse. And the moment God told Adam he should die if he sinned, it behooved him to look upon God as an hateful Being, for making such an unmerciful law. And had he been of the same temper we are naturally of, it would have appeared to him impossible to love that character of the deity, which was exhibited to his view in this law. And unless God does, after the day of judgment, reverse the final sentence, *depart ye cursed into everlasting fire*, it will behoove angels and saints, who ought to love their neighbours as themselves, for ever to look upon God as an hateful Being, while they view the damned, their fellow-creatures, tormented by him in the lake of fire and brimstone, for ever and ever. If, therefore, all beings in the intellectual system felt, as the objector appears to do, all would join with him in enmity to the divine character, through heaven, earth, and hell.

To say in this case, "if I am elected, redeemed, pardoned, and finally made eternally happy, I can love God, although others are damned, who deserve it no more than I do," is to declare, "that although I hate the character of the deity,

and care not what becomes of my fellow-creatures, yet as I love myself, if I am happy, I am content." Which is really to declare myself destitute of all godliness and humanity, and under the entire government of self-love.—But,

2. The objection is founded on an hypothesis which is contrary to plain fact, viz. that it is inconsistent with that love which created intelligences owe to themselves, to view it as a glorious thing in God to punish sin according to its desert. For, 1st. It in fact appeared a glorious thing in God to punish sin according to its desert, to the angels that stood, that very moment satan was driven out of heaven down into an eternal hell, and that with application to themselves. For there was not one of them but was ready to say from the bottom of his heart, "It is a glorious act in God to punish those rebels as he has done." And it would have been as glorious an act in God to have punished me in like sort, had I joined in their rebellion. 2d. It in fact appeared to Adam, before the grace of the Gospel was revealed, that it would be a glorious thing in God to punish him according to law, if he should sin. For otherwise the character of God exhibited to his view in the law he was under, had not appeared glorious in his eyes. 3d. It will, in fact, appear at the day of judgment, a glorious thing in God to punish the wicked according to their desert, to all holy beings, and that in perfect consistence with the highest exercises of the purest benevolence. Besides,

3. If it is not a glorious thing in God to punish sin according to its desert, there is no glory in the cross of Christ, in which sin was punished according to its desert, in the sinner's representative, the Son of God incarnate. Nay,

4. If the law does not appear glorious, antecedent to a consideration of the grace of the Gospel, the grace of the Gospel cannot be seen. For the relief granted to us in the Gospel is of grace, of mere pure grace, simply on this ground, that the divine law is holy, just, and good, a glorious law in itself. For had it not been such, God had been obliged in justice to have granted us some relief. Besides,

5. Let a man, blind to the glory of the law, be ever so fully assured in his own mind, that he is delivered from the

curse, although it may allay his heart-risings, because he is safe himself, and because he cares little what becomes of others, yet it has in its own nature not the least tendency to reconcile him to the divine law, or to the divine character therein exhibited. If God's pardoning my sins were the grounds of the law's loveliness, then a belief of pardon might convince me of the loveliness of the law. But the law is as lovely if I am punished, as if I am pardoned; for it is what it is. And granting pardon cannot render a bad law good; belief of pardon, therefore, only pacifies the angry mind of a guilty sinner, but has no tendency to convince him that the law is in itself good; witness the Pharisees in our Saviour's day, who, notwithstanding their assurance of heaven, were most inveterate enemies to the divine character exhibited in the law, which character was exemplified in the life of Christ. *They have both seen and hated both me and my Father.* John xv. 24. Witness, also, all open professed Antinomians, of the devoutest sort, who profess the assurance of the love of God, and at the same time appear the most avowed enemies to the divine law. Nay, an assurance of pardon in this case always confirms the native enmity of the heart to the divine law, as is plain from this. Let one of these people be convinced they are in an unpardoned state, and be awakened to some sense of the dreadfulness of eternal damnation; and their disposition to murmur and blaspheme, will be great in proportion to the greatness of their former confidence. Thus the Israelites, who after the giving of the law, setting up the tabernacle, and approaching to the borders of the promised land, had their confidence of arriving there raised to its greatest height, now were prepared on their disappointment, when the spies returned, to feel worse toward God than ever they had done before. Besides,

6. If, instead of its being owing to the badness of our hearts, it is, in the nature of things, impossible that the law should appear glorious, and the divine character therein exhibited, antecedent to a consideration of the grace of the Gospel, then contrary to the express words of the apostle, the Gentiles, who never heard of the Gospel, are NOT without excuse, in their want of conformity to the divne law, in

their *ungodliness, in their not glorifying God as God.* Rom. i. 18. 21. For they have a very good plea to make for themselves; an excuse that will fully justify them. For, as the objector rightly supposes, that kind of impossibility, which is owing to nothing bad in us, takes away all blame. Therefore, every mouth is not stopped, neither doth *the whole world stand guilty before God,* as to this particular. And thereupon St. Paul's Gospel, which is built on this foundation, is overthrown, if this objection is allowed to be of weight. And what is here said of the Gentiles, may be equally said of every impenitent sinner, who as yet knows not that he shall be ever the better for the grace of the Gospel, in the world to come. According to the objection, it is impossible, and therefore it is not the duty of such to love God; and their not loving him is no crime; and so Christ did not die to make atonement in this case, nor are we to repent, or to ask God to forgive us. All this will follow, if it be no crime for a sinner not to love God and his law, while as yet he knows not but that he shall perish for ever[r]. And,

r To avoid these consequences, a late author, who affirms that the divine law requires what is "utterly impossible;" yea, what implies "love to our own eternal destruction," and so is "inconsistent with our duty, contrary to our original constitution, and to the law of God:" yet, at the same time maintains, that this very law is "holy, just, and good," binding on all mankind. By holy, just, and good, he seems to mean precisely the same thing that other people do by unholy, unjust, and cruel; and accordingly he affirms, that "no loveliness conceivable," can be discerned in that character of the Deity, which is exhibited in his law, and that it is "utterly impossible" to love it. However, he also affirms, that all mankind "ought to love it, and are self-condemned if they do not." And that, although it is not owing to the badness in our hearts that we do not; yea, although it is in its own nature "utterly impossible, inconsistent with our duty of self-preservation, and love to ourselves," and so, in its own nature, "contrary to our original constitution, and to the law of God." A remarkable scheme of religion this! Query. Can there be any sin, or can we be self-condemned, in not loving a character which has no loveliness in it? Can that law be holy, just, and good, which requires us, on pain of eternal damnation, to do that which is in itself sinful, "contrary to the law of God?" Yea, rather, is not that a wicked law, which requires us to do a wicked thing, to do what is contrary to the law of God? Is not that a tyrannical law, which requires us to do that which is impossible, not through the badness of our hearts, but "utterly impossible," let our hearts be ever so good, "contrary to the original constitution of reasonable creatures?"—Would not the HOLY ONE of Israel have been obliged, in honour to himself, to have laid aside such an unreasonable, sinful, wicked, tyrannical law, had there

7. If we are justifiable in our native dislike to God's law, if we are not to blame for being enemies to the divine character therein exhibited, then to be reconciled to this character of God, is no man's duty, and so is no part of religion. A man may be a good man, and yet an enemy to that character of God which is exhibited in the law. Yea, perfectly holy, while he perfectly hates it. And so regeneration becomes a needless thing. For there is no need of a new divine spiritual principle to be begotten in us, to enable us to love God simply under the notion of a benefactor. For it was our Saviour's maxim, *that sinners love those that love them.* If the divine character, as exhibited in the divine law, is not to be loved, there is nothing in revealed religion but what we can love, without any other principles than those which are natural to us. We therefore on this hypothesis are not fallen creatures, nor do we need to be born again. All we need is a revelation that God loves us, and will make us for ever happy. The redeemer and the sanctifier, may both be left out of the account. So bad a law deserves no honour; and let that be set aside, and God love us, and we shall naturally love him, without any special influence from above. And thus the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ is overthrown.

But it is a plain case, that it was not originally the duty of finite intelligences to love themselves in such sort, as to look upon it an unamiable thing in God to punish them according to their crimes, in case of their revolt. This would suppose, that it was originally their duty to be enemies to God's government. This kind of self-love is peculiar to apostate creatures; and instead of being a duty, is of the nature of sin. Instead of being innocent, it is pregnant with enmity against God's true and real character. It ought therefore to be called by the proper name, which God has given it, a carnal mind; not the least tincture of which belonged to the original constitution of an innocent creature. *For the carnal*

never been a mediator? Would it not be inconsistent with every perfection of the divine nature to give his Son, to become incarnate by his life and death, to show the greatest respect, and do the greatest honour to such a law? Does not Antinomianism lead directly to infidelity? See Mr. Cudworth's Further Defence of Theron and *Aspasio*, p. 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227.

mind is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. Or, if we would give it another name, we may call it pride. For what is it but pride, for a sinner to think himself so good, and of such vast importance, that God must forfeit his character, and cease to be lovely, if he only punishes him according to his desert? Would it not be accounted pride in a murderer, to think the chief judge must lose his own character, if he pronounces the sentence of death upon him? That is, if he does what, in the eyes of every impartial man, it becomes him to do? And would it not be a full proof of a proud, haughty, impenitent, inimical spirit, in a traitor on the gallows, if when urged to say, "God save the king," he should reply, "it is impossible for me to wish the king prosperity, so long as I am doomed to die?" When in reason he ought to take the blame of his ruin wholly to himself.—Nor has he any ground to dislike his king and country, or be the less benevolent toward them because he is punished according to his desert. Rather he ought to go out of the world, saying, "Let all his subjects love and obey their most gracious Sovereign, although I receive my just desert, and am hanged for my treason." For his king is as worthy of the universal love and obedience of his subjects, as if he had never been so wicked as to bring himself to such a miserable end. And nothing but a criminal state of mind can prevent its appearing so to him. And if God's law be holy, just, and good, the application is easy. But to all this I may add, what would alone of itself have been a full answer to the objection, that Saint Paul does the supposed impossible deed, viz. pronounces the law in contradistinction from the Gospel, even *as a ministration of death and condemnation* to be *glorious*. 2 Cor. ii. 7. 9. But to proceed,

3. If the divine law was holy, just, and good, a glorious law, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ, then this apostate world might justly have been held bound by it for ever, and no relief provided. God was no more obliged in point of justice to provide relief for fallen man, than for fallen angels. In this respect we stood on a par with them. Our revolt did not render God less amiable in himself, or less worthy of our obedience, nor in the least free us from our

original natural obligations to love him with all our hearts, and yield a perfect obedience to his will. If our inclination to love and obey God ceased, yet as his worthiness of our love and obedience remained, our obligations were in full force, and the law was as reasonable and equitable after our fall as before. And so he was absolutely at liberty, in point of justice, to have held us bound by law, and never have provided any relief for any of the human race[s]. And,

If this is the very truth of the case, it will follow, that it was at God's sovereign election, to determine, whether to grant any relief, or not: and what relief to grant: and when, and to whom. To give his Son to die with a view to save all mankind, or only a part; to send the news of the Gospel to all nations, or only to some; to give every child of Adam, born in a Christian land, opportunity, by living, to hear the glad tidings, or only to grant this to some, while others die

s But on the other hand, if there is no loveliness in the divine nature, but what results from his being my friend, then I cannot be obliged to love God, unless he is my friend; for I cannot be obliged to love a being who has no loveliness in his nature. If there is no loveliness in God, it is no sin, but rather a duty, to think there is none, and feel accordingly. And so, if mankind, by the fall, lost the favour and friendship of God, and fell under his wrath, then, on this hypothesis, their obligation to love him ceased. It was no duty for any child of Adam to love God; no sin not to love him. And if no sin, then no repentance, no atonement, no pardon was needed in the case. The divine law ceased to be obligatory the moment the favour of God was lost by the fall: and so no child of Adam could be considered as being under it. It had been inconsistent with the divine perfections in God, to have held mankind bound by it; he was obliged in justice, if he brought us into being, to provide some relief for us. Yea, God was obliged in justice to forgive us, and become our friend, or not to require our love. For it would not be just and right to require us to love him, if there is no loveliness in his nature. And, on this hypothesis, there is no loveliness in his nature, till he forgives us, and becomes our friend. And as soon as God forgives us and becomes our friend, we shall naturally love him, and so we shall not need to be born of the spirit, for that which is born of the flesh may love a friend and benefactor: for sinners love those that love them. And so, on this scheme, the Redeemer and the Sanctifier are needless: and so, if this scheme is true, Christianity is overthrown. It concerns Mr. Cudworth to give a better answer to this reasoning than yet he has done. To say that the divine law requires us to do what is "contrary to the law of God," and yet is "holy, just, and good," is to solve the difficulty by an express self-contradiction. To say that God is in himself infinitely lovely, is to give up his whole scheme. But he must own this, or give up the Gospel. Further Defence, p. 221, &c.

in infancy, and never hear. Those who die in infancy, may as justly be held under law in the next world, as those that live may in this. God is under no more obligations to save those that die, than he is to save those that live; to grant the regenerating influences of his spirit to them, than he is to these. As to those who live and hear the Gospel once, God is not obliged to send them the news the second time, or to wait a moment longer after the first refusal, and if mankind are disinclined to hearken to the Gospel, God is at liberty to determine what pains to take with them, whether much, or little, or none: whether to use external means only, or to grant the internal influences of his spirit: whether to strive with them a longer or shorter time, in a greater or less degree, in a common or a special manner. He may *have mercy on whom he will have mercy*, and *whom he will he may harden*, i. e. leave to their own hearts, under such external circumstances, as he certainly knows will have this issue. And if any proud conceited rebel thinks himself hardly dealt with, and is ready in a rage to rise against God and against his law, with loud complaints, God is at full liberty, as the blame is wholly on the rebel's side, to treat him accordingly, and in righteous judgment give him up to the deceits of his own heart, and to the delusions of satan, to be led captive by him at his will, into open infidelity, or into delusive hopes and joys, that *he might believe a lie*, and finally *be damned*. 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11, 12.—And thus if the law is good, the whole of the divine conduct toward mankind, in fact, stands justified. For in no part of his conduct is there the least appearance of illegal severity. This never was objected even by his worst enemies. And if his law is good, his whole conduct, therefore, stands completely justified.—And,

If any say that the law was not good, that God could not justly have held mankind bound by it, but was obliged to provide some relief; then it will inevitably follow, that that book, which affirms the divine law to be holy, just, and good, and attributes the relief provided wholly to free grace, cannot be from God; because its fundamental maxims are false. So that, of necessity, we must grant the law to be good, with all its native consequences, or be infidels. And he who from

the heart does not the one, is in fact the other, in the sight of God.

If God was obliged in justice to provide all needful relief, then all the relief he has provided, which is no more than was really needed, is an act of justice. And if it is an act of justice, it is not an act of grace. And so, on this hypothesis, there is in the Gospel, absolutely no grace at all. Or,

If God was obliged in justice to provide, at least, some relief; then the relief provided in the Gospel, is, at least, partly an act of justice. And if partly an act of justice, not wholly an act of grace. On either hypothesis, the Gospel cannot be true, which every where claims to be wholly of free grace.

For the Son of God to become incarnate, and die to get justice done us, as though his father was a tyrant, is inconsistent with every perfection of the Deity. To entertain such a notion, is at least as great a reflection on the HOLY ONE of Israel as atheism itself. To say that God is unrighteous, is as impious as to say there is no God. And a system of religious affections arising from such views, must be, in an eminent degree, *an abomination to the Lord.*

IV. If the divine law is holy, just, and good, a glorious law, the law which all mankind are naturally under; then the degree of our sinful depravity, and the degree of our blame-worthiness is to be determined by this rule. And any other judgment of ourselves we come into, not agreeable to this standard, is not according to truth. So near as we approach to love God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves, and to a conduct exactly answerable, so near we approach to the rule of our duty. But so far as we are destitute of that lively, high, and ravishing sense of the divine glories, which is productive of perfect love, and a perfect obedience, so far are we from what we ought to be. And so far as we are destitute of that love to our neighbour, which will effectually excite us in thought, word, and deed, to conduct toward him, as we would that he should do towards us; so far we are from the rule. And we are to blame for every defect, in a degree equal to the

greatness of the legal penalty; that is, for every defect we are so much to blame as to merit eternal misery. And so far as our judgment of our moral character is regulated by this rule, so far our opinion of ourselves is according to truth. This is to think soberly of ourselves, and as we ought to think. To think better of ourselves, is pride. And the degree of our pride and groundless self-conceit, is therefore just equal to our distance from this view of ourselves, and to our distance from an answerable frame of heart toward ourselves, in the sight of God. Just so far as we are disposed to think the law too severe, just so far are we disposed to justify ourselves and condemn God: and just so far are we self-righteous, in the worst sense of the word. On the other hand, so far as the law actually appears to our hearts to be holy, just, good, and glorious, so far we actually justify God, and take all the blame to ourselves, and loath and abhor ourselves in his sight. And just so far, and no further, are we free from what the Scripture means by a self-righteous spirit. Just so far as God and his law rise in their glory in our view, and to our sense and feeling, just so far our character sinks, and is rendered odious, abominable, ill-deserving, hell-deserving, in our eyes: and just so far our need of Christ and free grace comes into view. For the most exalted virtue of the highest saint, weighed in the balance of the divine law, and compared with the demerit of the least sin, is lighter than the least atom of matter, compared with the whole material system. But of this more hereafter.

Those who, in the inmost recess of their hearts, never as yet viewed the divine law, as in itself holy, just, good, and glorious, are to this day under the full power of a self-righteous spirit, and under the reigning dominion of a spirit of enmity against God, and against the glorious Gospel of his Son. And the more religious and devout they are in their own opinion, just so much worse they be; as all their religion and devotion only feeds and confirms the pride of their hearts. For the whole of their good opinion of themselves as religious men, is nothing but pride and groundless self-conceit in the sight of God; who considers them in the midst of their highest raptures, as being what they are, and as deserving what

they do, compared with his holy law, that perfect rule of right. Which perfect rule of right they are so far from any degree of conformity to, that, as yet, in their inmost soul, they never once thought it to be good.—And,

V. If the divine law is holy, just, good, and glorious, true repentance for sin cannot begin to take place in the hearts of sinners, (nor for the same reason can they yield any sincere obedience to it,) till it begin to appear to be such. Sincere obedience to a law we sincerely hate, is a glaring inconsistence. And sincere repentance, when we do not feel ourselves to blame, is an express contradiction. But till the law begins to appear holy, just, good, and glorious, sinners cannot begin to see that that blame lies on them, which the Gospel calls them to acknowledge, and to humble themselves for, when it calls them to repentance. For, as in the Gospel an infinite atonement for sin is provided, the import of which is, that God's law is wholly right, and that we are wholly wrong, and as infinitely to blame, as the law supposes; so, when it calls us to repentance, it cannot be understood in any other sense. Nor is any other kind of repentance the thing the Gospel can possibly mean. The charge exhibited against us in the law, is by the cross of Christ pronounced to be perfectly right, and the law by which we are charged and condemned, is declared to be holy, just, and good, a glorious law, worthy to be magnified and made honourable: and all the blame is considered as being entirely in us, God and his throne for ever guiltless. Repentance begins in our beginning to view things in this light, with an answerable frame of heart. But to object against the charge as being too severe, and against the law as requiring too much, is a full proof of an impenitent heart. For the import of such an objection is, "the fault alleged is not in me, in manner and form as set forth in the charge. He that thus charges me, therefore, has done me an injury. It is therefore proper for him to repent, and not for me." And if any sinner, in such a state of mind, should by any delusion, be induced to believe, that God withdraws the charge, and delivers him from the curse, he might in this belief forgive his Maker, and to his own apprehension be fully reconciled to him. Which reconciliation, if it be called by the name of

evangelical repentance, yet is so far from being the thing, that is a full proof that such a sinner, in the eye of the Gospel, is not yet convinced, that it belongs to him to repent. For as yet he does not see himself to blame in manner and form, as alleged in the divine law. Every objection a man's heart makes against the law, every plea he advances for himself, every excuse, every extenuating consideration, is a proof he does not think himself to blame as therein held forth. And the more positively he affirms, that it is impossible he should love God, until first he knows that his sins are pardoned, the more positively does he declare that his uncircumcised heart is still unhumbled, and that he is still disposed to justify himself, and impute iniquity to his Maker. For God to forgive a sinner in this view, and so bring him to a reconciliation, is virtually to own that his law was too severe, and himself to blame, and to repent and make restitution, and so induce the sinner to forgive him. And to suppose that Christ died to bring God the Father to this, is the very first-born of blasphemy. And if sinners believe such a Gospel, and are ravished with it, their very faith proves them infidels; and their very joys prove they are enemies to the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. There can be not the least degree of that kind of repentance, which the Gospel calls sinners unto, unless we feel ourselves to blame in the sense which the death of Christ imports. But the plain import of the death of Christ is, that the law by which we are charged and condemned, is a good and glorious law. For its being such, was the very thing that rendered his mediation and death needful, in order to our being forgiven, consistent with the divine honour. To be blind to the beauty of the law, to plead in our own justification, to excuse, extenuate, &c. is to declare ourselves to be, in the sight of God, impenitent infidels, enemies to heaven. For every word we say in our justification, in this case, is to God's condemnation. For if we are not so much to blame as his law supposes, he is to blame who made the law; and repentance, restitution, and reformation, are his duty. And so a self-justifying, is a God-condemning disposition; and therefore of all things most diametrically opposite to the cross of

Christ, which declares God to be wholly right, and seals the declaration with blood.

VI. If the divine law is holy, just, and good, antecedent to a consideration of the death of Christ, then the gift of Christ, to be a Saviour, was an act of grace absolutely free. As God was not obliged to grant any relief at all; so the relief he has granted, in every view of it, is an act of grace absolutely free. The gift of Christ to be a Redeemer, the gift of the Holy Spirit to be a sanctifier, divine illumination, faith repentance, forgiveness, and every other blessing, contained in the Gospel, is absolutely of free grace.

And by the way, this is the true Gospel notion of free grace; and is what no Antinomian ever yet had a true idea of. For till the law appears to be a glorious law, worthy to be magnified and made honourable, the grace of the Gospel cannot be seen. For it was this very thing that rendered the gift of Christ, in God, an act of grace, altogether free. For had not the law been wholly good, God had been obliged in justice to grant us some relief. And had it not been altogether glorious, the death of Christ to do it honour had been needless.

And this, I say, is an idea of free grace, that no Antinomian ever had. I use the word Antinomian according to its proper signification, to mean, one that is against the law; which is the true character of all men, how much enlightened soever they have been, in reality or to appearance, who are yet blind to the beauty of the divine law. For all such are enemies to it in heart, whatever their profession may be. Arminians and Pelagians are professed enemies to the law, and so were those in the two last centuries, who were commonly called Antinomians. But those who profess to be enemies to the divine law, and boldly advance their objections against it, do only more impudently proclaim what more secretly lurks in the heart of every unregenerate man, how orthodox soever his profession may be. For every *carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.* And therefore it is equally true, as to all unregenerate men, as the apostle affirms, *the natural man cannot discern the things of the Spirit of God, for they are fool-*

ishness unto him. Neither the glory nor the grace of the Gospel was ever seen by an unregenerate man. For the Gospel has no glory nor grace in it, only on supposition the law was a glorious law antecedent to a consideration of the gift of Christ. Till, therefore, the law be thus viewed, and no unregenerate man ever viewed it thus, neither the glory nor the grace of the Gospel can ever be seen. *And if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.*

But I the rather say, this is an idea of the grace of the Gospel no Antinomian ever had. To set it in contrast with that notion of free grace, which Antinomians so called, are wont to have, and to glory in, viz. being pardoned before repentance: this is free grace indeed. *Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out,* sounds very legal in an Antinomian ear. To believe the pardon of sin, and God's love to me, impenitent as I am, is pure Gospel. And this belief is the source of love to God, and of all religion. And these, with them, are the doctrines of free grace, which they love, and for which they are full of zeal. But as to the free grace of the Gospel of Christ, which supposes, that God was absolutely unobliged to grant any relief to this apostate world, as the law by which we stood condemned, was holy, just, good, and glorious; explain it, till they begin a little to understand what you mean, and they will appear as great enemies to free grace, as any people in the world; just as the Pharisees of old, who made their boast of the law, and yet were enemies to the law, rightly understood. Their false notions of the law served only to feed their spiritual pride, just as false notions of Christ and free grace do with these men.

SECTION IV.

The design of the Mediatorial office and work of Christ, was to do honour to the divine law.

A MEDIATOR, to bring about a reconciliation, supposes the parties concerned to be at variance. If both parties are

to blame, it is the business of a Mediator to bring both parties to see their faults, to confess, reform, and make restitution, and so to make up. If one party is altogether right, and the other altogether wrong, then one party is to be wholly justified, approved, and commended, as publicly as the controversy is known, and the entire blame to be laid at the other's door; who, if he can make no restitution, must suffer according to his desert, unless the mediator, or some other, will interest himself in his welfare, so as to become his sponsor, and answer in his stead. And if his crime is of such a nature, that his penitency can make no atonement, if ever he is forgiven and received into favour, it must be simply on the credit of his sponsor. But in the case before us, God was wholly right, and we were wholly wrong; and so much to blame, that our deepest penitency ought in reason and justice to be disregarded. However, so far were we from penitency, as rather to be disposed to justify ourselves, and lay the blame on God, and on his holy law. And our disaffection to the divine character and government arose even to enmity itself. When therefore the Mediator espoused his Father's honour, and testified of the world, that their works were evil, they were angry, yea, they were enraged, and they put him to death as not fit to live. So far were they from a disposition to take the blame to themselves, confess, repent, return, and be reconciled. And this conduct of a set of men, who made very high claims to virtue, was but a specimen of that temper which is natural to all mankind. But what reason have mankind to be so disaffected to the Deity?

God, an absolutely perfect, and infinitely glorious and amiable being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and honour, and of universal obedience, the Creator and original proprietor of the Universe, as becomes him, assumes the authority of king and supreme governor over his own world, takes the throne, proclaims his divinity, saying, *I am the Lord, and besides me there is no other God; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and yield an entire obedience to his will.*— Adding, *he that doth these things shall live in them; but the soul that sins shall die.*

For us thus to love, honour, and obey him, is no more than a

practical acknowledgment of his Godhead and Lordship; it is no more than barely *giving unto the Lord the glory due unto his name.* And this is all he requires, and it is our duty; and our obligations to it are infinite, and it is infinitely for our interest. So that our disaffection and rebellion are unreasonable, groundless, nay, infinitely criminal. To be disaffected and to rise in open rebellion, as we in this lower world have done, is a practical declaration in the sight of the universe, (and practice speaks louder than words,) that God's character is not good, and that his law is bad. Or in other words, it is a practical declaration, that he is not what he claims to be, by nature, GOD, an absolutely perfect, and infinitely glorious and amiable being, and our rightful sovereign.

To have given up his law, founded on his Godhead and Lordship, and which only asserted his proper character and worth, and claimed his proper rights, had been a practical giving up of his divinity and supremacy, in favour of a disaffection absolutely groundless, of a rebellion infinitely unreasonable; a thing very unbecoming the absolutely perfect Being, at the head of the universe. Better, infinitely better, a whole race of such apostates be doomed to endless woes, as a public practical declaration of the infinite evil of their crimes.

The design of the incarnation, life, and death of the Son of God, was to give a practical declaration, in the most public manner, even in the sight of the whole intellectual system, that God was worthy of all that love, honour, and obedience, which his law required, and that sin was as great an evil as the punishment threatened supposed; and so to declare God's righteousness, and condemn the sins of an apostate world, to the end God might be just, and yet a justifier of the believer. And this he did by obeying and dying in our room and stead.

The Jewish dispensation, which was designed to prepare the way for, and to introduce the Christian, and which was a shadow of which Christ is the substance, was in its whole constitution purposely calculated to do honour to the divine law. The clouds, and the thick darkness, and the flame of a devouring fire on Mount Sinai, the thunders and the light-

nings, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud, were in honour of the divine law; which was by God promulged to an assembly of men, women, and children, containing near three million. An affair so grand as this had never before happened in this lower world. And all the variety of temporal curses enumerated and denounced against the transgressor, and all the variety of temporal blessings reckoned up and promised to the obedient, were in honour of the divine law. And the law being written with the finger of God on two tables of stone, laid up in the ark, and placed in the holy of holies, under the mercy-seat, the dwelling place of the God of Israel, was in honour of the divine law. And so were all the sacrifices of atonement, the altars, the Priests, especially the High-Priest, dressed in his holy robes, holiness to the Lord written on his forehead, the names of the twelve tribes on his breast and on his shoulder, the blood of atonement in his hand, entering once every year into the holy of holies, into the immediate presence of God, to make atonement. Nor could any transgressor of the law, under that dispensation, obtain remission of sins without shedding of blood. A plain acknowledgment, that his blood deserved to be shed, who transgressed the law. And so a practical declaration that the law was holy, just, and good.

And answerable to the spirit of that dispensation, the whole congregation of Israel were by the divine direction led, on their entering into the holy land, to Mount Gerizzim and to Mount Ebal; and while the curse of the law against the transgressor was proclaimed aloud, all the congregation answered, AMEN, as a most public and solemn declaration, that the law was holy, just, and good. Nor could a Jew without this acknowledgment, with any consistency, present a bull or a goat, to die in his stead, and make atonement for his sins.

But all the honours done to the divine law under that dispensation were but shadows, but mere shadows. They had no substance in them. They were acknowledgments too mean to be of any avail. They were of no weight at all to counterbalance the reproach cast on the divine Majesty by sin. And therefore *the blood of bulls and goats could not*

take away sin. Yea, *Lebanon was not sufficient to burn, nor all the beasts thereof, sufficient for a burnt-offering.*

Wherefore the Son of God, antecedent to his incarnation, is introduced, saying to his Father, "*Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire.* They had no dignity, no worth, no virtue, and could not answer the end. *Mine ears hast thou bored,* as the Jewish master did his servant's, who of his own free will said, I love my master and will be his servant for ever. O, eternal Father, I have offered to become thy servant in this great work, and thou hast accepted the offer, *and bored mine ears. Then said I, lo, I come, I delight to do thy will; yea, thy law is within my heart.*" Compare Exod. xxi. 5, 6. Ps. xl. 6, 7, 8. Heb. x. 5, 6, 7.

Him, therefore, did God set forth to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness. And because he thus voluntarily espoused the honour of his Father's government, and condemned sin in the flesh on the cross, because he thus loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore was his Father well pleased, smelt a sweet savour, exalted his Son, and became propitious to an apostate, sinful, guilty world, through him. For he, being God as well as man, was worthy, was of sufficient dignity, and his obedience and sufferings of sufficient weight in his Father's sight.

The import of that perfect obedience to his Father's will, in our stead, through the greatest trials, which the Son of God incarnate performed, was, that "God was worthy of supreme love and honour, and of universal obedience, from his creature man." The import of his sufferings in our room, in which he was made a curse to redeem us from the curse of the law, was, that "the curse of the law was strictly just, and such as became his Father to threaten and to execute." The import of his appearing in the presence of God in heaven, with his own blood, to make intercession for transgressors, is, that "he does not, nay, cannot, desire any favour to be shown to sinners under a notion that the law is too severe: but only as being considered holy, just, good, and glorious, worthy to be magnified and made honourable by the blood of the Son of God." And the justice of the divine law will appear in a striking light, when he who thus honoured it in his own per-

son on the cross, and thus honours it at his Father's right hand in heaven, appears to put it in execution at the last day on his near relatives, his brethren according to the flesh; who would never own the goodness of the law, nor take the blame of their disaffection and rebellion to themselves, and on this foot despised and rejected the glorious grace of the Gospel. And all holy beings will echo to the last sentence, and with the highest approbation join to cry, AMEN, HALLELUJAH: *while the smoke of their torment ascends for ever and ever.*

Thus the whole mediatorial scheme is designed, and in its own nature adapted, to do honour to the divine law.

And to do honour to the divine law was the only thing that rendered the mediatorial office and work of Christ needful in order to the salvation of sinners. For God was not an unrighteous Being, and so could not be disposed to hold his creatures bound by a bad law, unless his Son would die to procure their relief. Nor was the goodness of the divine nature so small, that he could not find in his heart to show mercy to sinners, unless his Son, to move his compassions, would die for them on earth, and plead their cause in heaven. Had the law in fact been bad, it had been the most honourable thing in the divine Majesty to have laid it aside expressly as such, and no mediator had been needful in the case; and had there been no bar in the way of the honourable exercise of divine grace to a guilty world, infinite goodness, by a sovereign act, might at an infinitely less expense, have pardoned and saved all the human race, and all the labours and sufferings of his Son to make atonement had been needless. God did not want a heart to do us justice. Nay, God had an heart overflowing with infinite goodness; witness the gift of his Son. And so no mediator was needful to move the divine compassions, much less to prevent his being too severe with us. Yea, a mediator for any such purposes had been an infinite reproach to the deity. A mediator therefore was needful, in order to the salvation of sinners, for no other purpose, but to do honour to the divine law, which we had dishonoured by our sins. And thus he asserted the divine character, vindicated the rights of the Godhead, declared the righteousness of the divine government, condemned sin, laid all the

blame of our disaffection and rebellion at our own door, while he obeyed and died in our room and stead, that we through him might be saved. But,

I. If Christ died to do honour to the divine law, then there is no glory in the gospel only on supposition that the law is a glorious law. For not one of the divine perfections are manifested in the death of an incarnate God to do honour to the divine law, if the divine law was not worthy of this honour. It was no act of wisdom in God to give his Son to die to do honour to that which deserved no such honour. It was no act of holiness, justice, or goodness. It was neither to the honour of God, nor needful to the salvation of men. And,

If not one of the divine perfections are manifested in the death of Christ, only on supposition that the law is a glorious law, not one of the divine perfections can be seen in this affair, only in a view of the glory of the law. No glory can be seen in the atonement, only as the law appears to be a glorious Gospel. To every one at enmity against the divine law, the glory of the Gospel will be hid [t]. And,

[t] If God's law requires, on the penalty of eternal destruction, that which is in its own nature sinful, then it is a wicked law. But that which is "contrary to the law of God," is in its own nature sinful: for sin is a transgression of the law. But, according to Mr. Cudworth, the law requires what is "contrary to the law of God," what "clashes with our duty." (P. 222, 223, 224.) Therefore, according to him, it is a wicked law. But if it is a wicked law, God is obliged in justice to repeal it. But to give his Son to die, to do honour to a wicked law, of all things in the universe, would be most contrary to all the divine perfections. In this view of the law, therefore, not one of the divine perfections can be seen on the cross of Christ. What, then, does Mr. Cudworth mean by "loving God for his own loveliness as thus discovered by the Gospel, every divine perfection being discovered as harmonizing in the salvation of the guilty by Jesus Christ?" (p. 225.) when on his scheme there is not one divine perfection manifested, nor any loveliness of the divine nature discovered. Yea, if the law had been what Mr. Cudworth says it is, it had been in its own nature an infinitely wicked thing for the Son of God to die to do it honour. It had been to do honour to a wicked law; which is the same thing as to do honour to wickedness; which is an infinitely wicked thing. What then does Mr. Cudworth mean, by "loving God for his own loveliness?" Why, he believes, that by means of Christ's death, his sins are pardoned, and God becomes his particular friend, turned to be entirely on his side, "disposed to make him happy, and oppose whatever is contrary to his happiness:" (p. 221. 223.) "and this appears lovely to him, and is all the idea of the loveliness of the divine nature he can conceive

II. If the excellency of the divine law, as a perfect rule of right, holy, just, and good, was the only thing that rendered the death of Christ needful in order to the salvation of sinners; then a view of the excellency of the divine law, as a perfect rule of right, holy, just, and good, and an answerable view of our own character and state, is the only thing that can lead us to see our need of the atonement of Christ. We cannot see our need of Christ's atonement, unless we see that which renders his atonement needful; but the excellency of the divine law was that which rendered the atonement of Christ needful: therefore we cannot see our need of the atonement of Christ, unless we see the excellency of the divine law. A sinner frightened with the apprehensions of eternal burnings, may see his need of deliverance, without any idea of the need of an infinite atonement in order thereto.—And,

To say, "that the divine law is holy, just, and good, in our view, but not glorious;" is to say, "that holiness, justice, and goodness, in our view, are not glorious attributes:" and if so, then neither does God deserve our love, nor is his law worthy to be honoured on the cross of Christ, in our view.

So long as we are at enmity against the law, so long as the divne appears to be an inglorious, unlovely, undesirable law; not perfect in beauty, without a blemish, with application to ourselves: even so long our need of Christ to die in our stead, to do honour to the law, will be undiscerned.—Therefore,

of; (p. 221.) for he loves himself, although he appears perfectly stupid to the honour of the divine character in imputing such wickedness to the Deity, as requiring what is "contrary to the law of God, and clashes with our duty." And he can be ravished to think his own happiness secure, although so blind to the beauty of the divine character, as to feel disposed, to declare before the world, that it is "utterly impossible" to love it. And pray, now, how does Mr. Cudworth do to keep from plunging headlong into downright infidelity? How can he believe that the Son of God became incarnate, and died to do honour to a law so unreasonable and wicked, as to require what "is inconsistent with the original constitution of a reasonable creature, and contrary to the law of God?" Why, indeed, he feels, or rather pretends to feel, no difficulty in the way. For he can, in express contradiction to himself, without a blush, pronounce this very law "holy, just, and good." "This does not infer that the law was too rigorous," says he, "no, far from it, this is only Mr. Bellamy's forced conclusion." (P. 226.) But not a word does he say to show wherein my conclusion was forced, or to free his own scheme from this glaring inconsistence.

To the natural man, in the Apostolic age, when the Gospel, as is acknowledged, was rightly stated, the work of redemption by Christ, appeared to be a foolish, shocking affair, (compare 1 Cor. i. 18. 23, 24. Chap ii. 14. 2 Cor. iv. 3.) *We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.* For while they were, as the same apostle observes, *at enmity against God and his law,* (Rom. viii. 7.) to hear that the Son of God incarnate died on the cross, to *declare God's righteousness,* to condemn sin, to magnify the law and make it honourable, must needs stumble and confound the carnal Jews, and appear foolishness to the pagan Greeks. No miracles therefore were sufficient to convince them of the divine original of the Gospel. Nothing short of the immediate influences of the spirit of God to open their eyes and take the veil from their hearts. *But unto them who were thus* CALLED, *both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* And if *our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost. The preaching of the cross is foolishness to them that perish.* For indeed it had been a foolish thing for God to have given his Son to die to save sinners, had there been no need of it: and there had been no need of it, had not the divine law, which man had broken, and by which he stood condemned, been holy, just, and good, a glorious law, worthy to be honoured by the blood of an incarnate God. But to natural men, the divine law does not appear to be thus glorious and thus worthy of honour: rather it appears an odious, hateful law, which ought to be repealed. *For the carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be*[u].

u If God, antecedent to a consideration of the gift of his Son, viewed in the glass of the law, was an ugly, hateful being; then he deserved to be hated and abhorred: and then the law which required us to love him on pain of death, was an unreasonable, tyrannical law: and then it deserved to be hated and treated with contempt, and not to be loved and honoured: and then the death of Christ to do it honour, was not the wisdom of God, but a *stumbling-block* and *foolishness:* and the Gospel is not divine, is not from God: nothing remains but infidelity.

III. An antinomian spirit is an antichristian spirit; to hate the divine law is to be an enemy to the cross of Christ; to hate the divine law is to be an enemy to the Son of God incarnate, who loved the law, and died to do it honour: an enemy to his character, and to the very design of his death. And,

An antinomian spirit is the very source of infidelity. For if the divine law is an odious, hateful law, it is incredible, it is absolutely incredible, that the Son of God should come from heaven, and die to do it honour. Therefore, every antinomian is at heart an Infidel. But every unregenerate man is in this sense an antinomian. Rom. viii. 7. Therefore every unregenerate man is under the reigning power of infidelity. And therefore it is written, (1 John v. 1.) *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* And, (Rom. x. 9.) *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall*

To say, that the law is holy, just, and good, in requiring us to love a hateful character on pain of death, is worse than infidelity. To believe God a hateful being, and a tyrant in our hearts, and yet with our mouths to say, it is in him holy, just, and good, to require us to love him on pain of death, is to speak lies in hypocrisy. My Theron believed the law holy, just, and good, in requiring supreme love on pain of death, when he said, "Let all heaven for ever love and adore the infinitely glorious majesty, although I receive my just desert and perish for ever." He saw God's character exhibited in his law to be lovely. This led him to see why Christ so loved and so honoured this character on the cross. And Christ crucified, in this view, appeared to him the wisdom of God. Should one tell Theron, that Christ never did love this character of God; never did think "that all heaven ought for ever to love and adore the infinitely glorious majesty, viewed as thus disposed to punish sin with so great severity;" and should he affirm, that this is a "species of love beyond what Jesus Christ ever had:" and that it was not from love to this character originally, and to do it honour, that Christ was willing to *endure the cross and despise the shame;* but merely because he was bribed, because his Father hired him by *the joy set before him:* and should one endeavour to prove all this from scripture; Theron, shocked with the blasphemy, would be ready at once to pronounce the man worse than an infidel. And yet, if this is not the point of light in which Mr. Cudworth views things, I know not what he means, by what he says, p. 224. for, in any other view, there is no force in what he says. For if Christ verily thought in his heart, and that previous to a consideration *of the joy set before him,* that "all heaven ought for ever to love and adore the infinitely glorious majesty, for being so severe against sin;" then Theron, through the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, was only brought to view things in a Christian light. That is, in the same light that Christ did.

believe in thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

IV. If God the Father gave his Son to die, if God the Son voluntarily left his Father's bosom, and expired upon the cross to do honour to the divine law; then on the cross of Christ we have the highest possible external proof of the goodness of the divine law. The highest proof which could have been given by God the Father or God the Son; and so the highest external proof, that God our Creator is infinitely worthy of our supreme love and universal obedience, and that our disaffection to him and to his government is entirely groundless, yea, infinitely criminal, exactly agreeable to the import of the divine law. Therefore,

To doubt of the infinite amiableness of God our Creator, to doubt of the absolute perfection of his law and government, or to doubt whether our disaffection be thus groundless and thus criminal, is to doubt of the truth of the Gospel. Every objection against the divine character, every objection against the divine law, every sin-extenuating, self-justifying plea, is the language of infidelity. For if our objections against God and his law are of the least weight, or if our pleas do in the least render us excusable, then Jesus was not the Son of God. For if Jesus was the Son of God, God and his law are wholly right, and we are wholly wrong, and as much to blame and as inexcusable as the curse of the law supposes; for this was the ground on which he died. And if in his death he sealed a falsehood with his blood, surely he did not come from God.

Therefore, to believe with all the heart that Jesus is the Christ, is to believe with all the heart, that God our Creator is infinitely amiable, infinitely worthy of supreme love and universal obedience from his creature man. And to believe with all the heart, that the divine law, which requires this of us, in our present state, on pain of eternal damnation, is a holy, just, and good, and glorious law, worthy to be magnified and made honourable by the obedience and death of an incarnate God: to believe with all the heart that our disaffection to the divine character, law, and government, is not only entirely groundless, but infinitely criminal; and to believe with all the heart, that the Son of God, in this view, be-

came incarnate, lived and died, that he might declare God and his law to be wholly right, and the whole blame to be in us; or in other words, that he might declare God's righteousness, and condemn sin in the flesh; that this was the import of his being made a curse to redeem us from the curse, and that this was the design of his being set forth to be a propitiation; and that it is only in his name, and through him, who has thus done, that God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. But,

To believe these truths with all the heart, to come cordially into these sentiments, is perfectly contrary to every vicious bias inthe heart of a sin-loving, sin-extenuating, self-justifying, God-hating, law-condemning creature; which is the character of every unregenerate man. Therefore,

Every unregenerate man is not only at heart an infidel, but even as great an enemy to the truth of the Gospel, as he is to the holiness, justice, and goodness of the law. Therefore,

No man can say that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Holy Ghost. 1 Cor. xii. 3. *No man can come to the Son, but whom the Father draws.* John vi. 44. *And whosoever believeth Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* 1 John v. 1. And yet,

V. From this view of the mediatorial office and work of Jesus Christ, his true character and divine mission may be infallibly determined. Had he been an enemy to the divine law, which the God of Israel had so honoured on Mount Sinai, and in the whole Jewish dispensation, it had been a full proof, that he was not the Messiah promised in the Jewish sacred writings. A full proof, rather that he was an enemy to the God of Israel, and on the side of his rebellious subjects, who all agree to hate his law. But now it appears, that,

He loved his Father with all his heart; was perfectly in his interest, wholly on his side, and on the side of his law and government. He judged his Father to be wholly right, and we to be wholly wrong; his Father's law to be holy, just, and good, and we altogether to blame, even as much to blame as the law supposed; and was as great an enemy to the wickedness of an apostate world, as the Father himself. While his

regard to the welfare of lost sinners was so great, that he was willing to die for their redemption, he looked upon them so much to blame, and so deserving of the threatened punishment, that he had not the least desire they should be pardoned, unless in a way in which it should be most explicitly acknowledged, that it had been a worthy becoming deed in God to have punished them according to law. And thus he was to perfection his Father's friend, and to perfection an enemy to the spirit of his Father's rebellious subjects. Thus *he loved righteousness and hated iniquity.* And in this frame of heart, he perfectly obeyed his Father's law, and offered up himself a sacrifice to God, for the sins of the world. Which is,

A full demonstration that he was sent of God. For he is his Father's very image. We may often, from the countenance of a child, guess who his Father is; but here the Son is *the express image of his Father's person.* So that no man, who knows God the Father, can doubt whether Jesus is his Son. For the very *glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ.* Justly therefore did our blessed Saviour condemn the infidel Jews, as hating his Father, because they hated him; for he and his Father were so exactly alike, that to hate him was a full proof they hated the Father also, (John xv. 23.) and justly did he dispute their claim to have God for their Father, and argue that they rather had the devil to their father, from the malignant spirit they showed towards him, who was the very image of the Deity. John viii. 42. *If God were your Father, ye would love me.* Ver. 44. *Ye are of your father the devil.* And justly did he attribute all their opposition to him and to his cause, to their ignorance of, and hatred to, the true God, and affirm that no man could be an infidel, but from a wicked, ungodly heart. John iii. 19, 20, 21. Chap. vii. 17. Chap. viii. 38. 48. Chap. xv. 21. 25.

To say that Jesus Christ, who loved the divine law, and lived and died to do it honour, came from the devil, who hates the divine law, and hath set up his kingdom in opposition to it, and is at the head of the grand rebellion in the intellectual system, is just the same kind of absurdity Christ's enemies were driven to of old, when to evade the evidence exhibited in his miracles, they said, *he casteth out devils by*

Beelzebub. For both equally suppose, that *satan is divided against himself;* and is pulling down his own kingdom with his own hands. Matth. xii. 24. 26.

To be blind to the glory of Christ crucified, is of the same nature, and altogether as criminal, as to be blind to the glory of God the Father. And to be an unbeliever in the Son, as great a vice as to be an enemy to the Father; to reject revealed religion, an argument of as bad a heart, as downright atheism. The sentence therefore is just, *he that believeth not shall be damned.* For the Gospel carries its own evidence along with it, as clearly as the visible creation. Nay, all the divine perfections are more clearly to be seen in the cross of Christ, to one not criminally blind, than the invisible things of God be, in the things which are made. For, *the glory of God is to be seen in the face of Jesus Christ.* So that, with the Jews of old, all who live under the light of the Gospel in any age, have no cloak for their sin, if they continue unbelievers.

VI. If the design of Christ's mediatorial office and work was to do honour to the divine law, we may hence learn the nature of Christ's merits, or why his obedience was so meritorious in his Father's eyes, and why the sacrifice of himself was so acceptable, of so sweet smelling a savour, and his whole character, office, and work, so infinitely well-pleasing to the Deity, that, to testify his approbation in the sight of the whole universe, he raised him from the dead, took him up into heaven, gave him a place on his own throne, and at his own right hand, issued out public orders through the world above, *worship him all ye gods,* and resigned up all the angelic hosts to his command as ministering spirits to do his will, and set him at the head of the whole universe, with all power and authority in heaven and earth, to reign till all his enemies are put under his feet, and his whole scheme carried into execution, putting all things under him, not only all created things, but even God the Holy Ghost, to be sent in his name to convince the world of sin, and effectually to call home the elect to God through him, *for all things were put under him, him only excepted, who did put all things under him;* and further, to testify his approbation and infinite delight in the obedience

and sacrifice of his Son, peace and good will are proclaimed to this revolted world, God becomes propitious, ready to be reconciled to any, how vile soever, who repent and return in the all-prevailing NAME of Jesus Christ, his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased; so now repentance and remission of sin in his name may be preached to all nations, and whosoever will may come, may return to God through him, the fullest assurances of acceptance in his name being given. I say, if the design of Christ's mediatorial office and work, of his life and death, was to do honour to the divine law, we may see the reason why his merit is so great in his Father's eyes, and why he is thus accepted and thus rewarded by him; it was because in all he DECLARED HIS FATHER'S RIGHTEOUSNESS. He rendered to God the glory which was due unto his name. He glorified his Father on earth, and therefore his Father glorifies him in heaven [s].

Our revolt from God, in this lower world, had been an open, public, practical declaration, in the sight of the whole intellectual system, "that the infinitely glorious majesty of hea-

s There are thousands that talk of trusting in the righteousness of Christ, who hate his righteousness with all their hearts. They pretend to build all their hopes on his merit, when that, in him, which was so meritorious in his Father's eyes, is the very abhorrence of their souls. Every carnal unregenerate heart is at enmity against the divine law. Rom. viii. 7. But to hate the divine law, is to hate that, in a conformity to which the righteousness of Christ consisted, and his merit lay. He who is disaffected to this law, is therefore equally disaffected to the true and real character of Christ. He hates that righteousness of Christ, which was so meritorious in his Father's eyes. And can a man consistently and really trust in the merit of that, which, in his eyes has no merit in it, but is rather altogether odious? Is not he, who denies the infinite amiableness of the Deity, as he is in himself, and yet pretends to trust in the righteousness of Christ, which consisted in treating God as an infinitely amiable being, guilty of the most ignorant and stupid self-contradiction? What then is it, that men do trust in, to whom the Gospel is entirely hid? What is the Christ they love? and what do they mean by his righteousness and merit? Why, one man believes that the law is abated; and this gives him comfort: another believes there is forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners; and this gives him hope: and another believes his sins in particular are forgiven; and this gives him joy more abundantly. And each one calls his belief *faith in Christ*, when it is the belief of a lie. And each one thinks he loves Christ and trusts in his righteousness, because he loves and trusts in his own lie. For a lie is at the bottom of the confidence of every carnal man; and a lie, which the divine law, were it set home, would detect. Rom. vii. 7, 8.

ven and earth, was not worthy to be loved and obeyed by his creature, man, as his law required: nor should we deserve, nor need we fear, that we should be punished according to his law, if we did rebel."

Love to the Deity, in the governor of the world, awakened infinite resentment. And to bear testimony against this infinitely impious and wicked insult, all the human race were doomed to eternal death. Thus was the wrath of God revealed from heaven.

The interposition of the Son of God in our nature, to obey, and die in the room of rebellious, guilty man, was a practical acknowledgment, made in the most public manner, in the sight of heaven and earth, and in a manner the most honorary to the Deity, "that God was as worthy to be loved and obeyed, as the law supposed; and our disaffection and rebellion, as great an evil: and that therefore the law, in all its strictness, and with all its curses, is holy, just, and good." Thus God's dignity was asserted, his authority owned, the righteousness of his government declared, his moral character vindicated, and sin condemned, and in the whole, the glory given unto God which was due unto his name. This pleased the holy governor of the universe. He smelt a sweet savour in this sacrifice, exalted his Son, and became propitious to a guilty race through him. For now he *might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* Rom. iii. 25, 26.

He might be just. Just to the rights of the Godhead, to the honour of his law and government, and sacred authority, these being all effectually secured. Nay, to become propitious to a guilty world, as a reward of Christ's merit, was an honour, an infinite honour to his Son, who had honoured him; and so was to the glory of God the Father. For if the Son is honoured for honouring the Father, it is all *to the glory of God the Father,* (Phil. i. 6. 11.) to bestow eternal life, on the foot of law, in testimony of his approbation, when his creatures, by supreme love and honour, and universal obedience to him, practically acknowledge him to be GOD and LORD, is altogether to the glory of God the Father. Even so it was in this case also. And thus God might be

just, even as just to his own honour, in every point of view, in justifying him that believeth in Jesus, as he would have been, in the bestowment of eternal life, as a reward to perfect obedience, had man remained loyal to his sovereign. For not only was the curse removed; but even the blessing itself was merited. And while bestowed, as a reward to him whose merit lay in glorifying his Father on earth, the very bestowment of the blessing, was to the glory of God the Father. And thus God might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

WHICH *believeth in Jesus.* Who in a view of the glory of the divine nature, and the excellency of the divine law, and conscious to the inexcusableness and infinite criminalness of his disaffection and rebellion, believes that the Son of God hath become incarnate, lived, and died, for the ends already mentioned, and in this belief is encouraged and emboldened in his name to return and come to God: to come to God through him. For, *to come to God by Christ,* Heb. vii. 25. in the *name of Christ,* John xvi. 23. *believing on his name,* John i. 12. and to have *boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,* Heb. x. 9. are all expressions of the same import.

Heavenly things cannot be fully represented by things earthly; however our conceptions of the nature of Christ's mediation may be a little assisted by such a similitude as this. Suppose

A father, of an unblemished character, admirably skilled in the art of government, at the head of a numerous family of children, wise and upright, and kind in all his conduct towards them; in a word, suppose his character without a blemish, and his government without a fault. In this case, there can arise no disaffection to his person or government among his children, unless the fault be wholly on their side. For it is supposed there is no fault on his. His eldest son grows proud and haughty, loves bad company, and turns debauchee. Meanwhile, he naturally becomes disaffected to his father's character and government, and disrelishes all his ways. At length he rises in open rebellion, leaves his father's house, and seeks another home, and blackens his fa-

ther's name wherever he goes. He is blamed by the neighbours, and he justifies himself; but all he says in his own vindication is to his father's condemnation: for he cannot say one word to justify his own conduct, but which at least implicitly declares the fault to be in his father. For if his father is wholly right, he is wholly wrong. A self-justifying spirit therefore in him, is most provoking to his father. But as his disaffection is great, he entertains a very ill idea of his father's character, and is heartily at enmity against his government, and it is as natural to justify himself and declaim against his father's conduct, as it is to breathe. And let any man appear a hearty friend to his father, vindicate his character, and justify all his conduct, he feels himself reproached, and in a rage is ready to rise and revenge himself; and protests he never will be reconciled to his father, and live at home, unless he will alter his whole plan of government, and bring down the orders of his family to his taste. But as the father is conscious there is no fault on his side; so it appears to him inconsistent with his own honour, and with the general good of his family, to alter in one single point. For, says he, "My rebellious son is altogether to blame; and there is need of alteration in none but him." Thus stands the controversy. Should he, in a delirium, believe his father's character entirely altered, and that he was become altogether love to him, rebellious as he is, the delusion might give him joy, and confirm his vicious temper, both at once. Should one undertake to be a mediator, under a notion that the father was partly to blame, a little too rigid, it might please the son, but it would be an affront to the father; and such a mediator would lose all his influence in a moment. He would be looked upon as taking the wrong side, and countenancing wickedness; a minister of sin, one that hated righteousness and loved iniquity. No mediator could find acceptance, but one who should most explicitly declare the father to be wholly right, and the rebellious son to be wholly wrong. Nor could his mediation be of any influence to procure a pardon, any further than it tended to assert the father's injured character, and vindicate his abused government, and establish his affronted authority, and humble and reclaim his

haughty, ruined child. Nor could any repentance be ever looked upon sincere, or any reconciliation be esteemed genuine, in the rebellious son, but what should have its foundation in thorough conviction, that his father's character and government were wholly right; and his own temper and conduct, from first to last, entirely wrong. An entire alteration in the state of his mind would therefore be absolutely necessary, to the end his father's character and government might appear in their native beauty. And as soon as ever he begins to see the beauty of his father's character and government, he will begin with all his heart, to take all the blame to himself: and be ready, with the prodigal son, to say, *Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worth to be called thy son.* And now he will be glad to return, if he may. But,

A crime may be too great to be forgiven, merely upon repentance, let the criminal be ever so penitent. Thus a wilful murderer must be put to death, let him be ever so sorry for his crime. And thus a prince, lately married to a poor maid, who, notwithstanding all her obligations to fidelity, soon after marriage, to his great reproach, prostitutes herself to the meanest wretch in the kingdom, is obliged in honour to himself and to his kingdom, to put her away, let her penitency be ever so great. Pardon cannot be granted in such cases merely upon repentance. Something further is plainly needful. But these instances fall infinitely below the case they are designed to represent. For in the sight of God, a sinner, ever so penitent for his crimes, deserves so much to be cast off for ever, that infinite wisdom, goodness, and rectitude, judged he could not honourably be pardoned and received into favour, unless the Son of God himself would become incarnate, and stand, and obey, and die in his stead. Penitency is so far from being a sufficient atonement for our sins, that merely the defects attending the deepest repentance of the most humble, broken-hearted saint on earth, according to law, that perfect rule of right, merits eternal damnation. There is no hope, therefore, in the case of a penitent sinner, absolutely no hope at all, but what arises from the atonement,

merits, and mediation of Christ, and the free grace of God through him, as revealed in the Gospel.

This view of the mediation of Christ may help us to understand the following Scripture phrases: John iii. 17. *God sent his Son, that the world* THROUGH HIM *might be saved.* 1 John iv. 9. *That we might have life* THROUGH HIM. John xx. 31. *have life* THROUGH HIS NAME. Rom. vi. 23. *The gift of God is eternal life* THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. Acts x. 43. THROUGH HIS NAME *whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.* 1 Cor. vi. 11. *Justified* IN THE NAME *of the Lord Jesus.* Rom. v. 1. *Have peace with God* THROUGH HIM;—ver. 9. *Saved from wrath* THROUGH HIM. John xiv. 6. *He is* THE WAY *to the Father, and no man cometh to the Father but* BY HIM. John x. 9. *I am the* DOOR. BY ME *if any man enter in.* John xvi. 23. *Ask the Father* IN MY NAME. Heb. vii. 25. *Come to God* BY HIM. 1 Pet. i. 21. BY HIM *do believe in God.* Heb. x. 19, 20. *Boldness to enter into the holiest* BY THE BLOOD *of Jesus.* BY A NEW AND LIVING WAY, *which he hath consecrated for us.* Eph. ii. 18. THROUGH HIM *have access to the Father.* Chap. v. 20. *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father,* IN THE NAME *of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Pet. ii. 5. *Offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God* BY JESUS CHRIST. Eph. i. 6. *Made us acceptable* IN THE BELOVED. 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. *God hath reconciled us unto himself* BY JESUS CHRIST. *God was* IN CHRIST *reconciling the world to himself.*

For as the mediation of Christ was designed to secure the divine honour, and open a way for the exercise of divine grace to the glory of God the Father, and as he hath finished the work appointed him to do; so through HIM God can consistently with his honour, call and invite a guilty world to return and be reconciled, and can stand ready to pardon and receive to favour, and give eternal life to all that come to him in Christ's name. And whosoever shall hear God's call, understand and believe the Gospel, may see sufficient warrant to come, may *have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,* to *come to God by him;* and such shall be justified in his name, freely by divine grace *through the re-*

demption which is in Christ Jesus; be accepted themselves in the beloved, and their spiritual sacrifices be acceptable to God by him; and through him they may have peace with God, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And whatsoever they ask in his name shall be granted. For through him they may have access to God. And,

The same view of the glory of the holy majesty of heaven and earth, which brings us to see that God and his law are wholly right, and our disaffection and rebellion wholly wrong, and infinitely criminal, and so to see our need of Christ's mediation, righteousness, and atonement; at the same time discovers God to be the supreme good, and the Gospel to be true. In consequence of which, it appears our highest duty and highest interest to return to God, the fittest and happiest thing in the world. This begets an inclination to return to God as our sovereign Lord and supreme good. And so a foundation for repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and for every filial grace, is at once laid in the soul.

We return to God in Christ's name, conscious eternal destruction is our just desert. Our courage, our boldness, even all our hope of acceptance, is from the mere grace and infinite goodness of God through Jesus Christ. Hell our due, we look only to *free grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.* Our whole dependence rests here. And this is what St. Paul calls, *Faith in Christ's blood.* It implies an understanding and belief of the report of the Gospel, as to the nature of Christ's mediatorial office and work, and an exercise of heart towards the mediator, answerable to the nature of his office and work, called *receiving him,* and *believing* IN HIS NAME; and denoted by those phrases so often used in the New Testament, when speaking of a sinner's coming to God *by Christ,* THROUGH *Christ,* IN THE NAME *of Christ.* For to come to God *by Christ, through Christ, in the name of Christ,* and *by Faith in Christ's blood,* are all of the same import.

To say, that faith consists in "the bare belief of the bare truth," without admitting any other idea into its definition, does not come up to the plain purport of these phrases, which

evidently denote *a dependence on him as mediator*. To come to God *in his name, by him*, and *through him*, who is the appointed mediator between God and man, is not only to believe him to be such, but also to be affected towards him as such, in all our approaches to God. It is not only to believe him to be the Messiah, but to believe in his name as such, and to have *boldness to enter into the holiest by his blood*[x].

x *Object. To come to God in the name of Christ*; is the fruit of faith, and not that faith itself by which we are justified. He who believes the Gospel to be true, has the whole of that which the New Testament means by justifying faith. He will come to Christ, and come to God in the name of Christ; but these are the fruits of faith, and not faith itself.

Answ. I grant these are the fruits of faith. That is, the fruits of a belief of the truth of the Gospel. But the question is still undetermined, which is this: Does not the New Testament mean to comprehend this belief and these fruits of it, in justifying faith? Or does this belief justify a sinner prior to these effects? Our Saviour said, *ye will not come to me that ye might have life.* If a bare belief that he was the Messiah, entitled to eternal life, then one who believed this had a title to eternal life before he came to him, and if so, he had no need to come to him that he might have life. Our Saviour directed his disciples to *ask* all things of *the Father in his name.* He also taught them every day to pray, *forgive us our debts.* Query—How can we go to God in the name of Christ for the pardon of daily transgressions, if pardon is not to be obtained this way? If pardon is had "by a bare belief of the bare truth," we are not in the belief of the truth to ask for pardon in the name of Christ, because we are pardoned already. And so we are never to ask pardon in the name of Christ at all. Before we believe the Gospel, we cannot do it: and when we believe the Gospel, it is too late; for we are pardoned already. And if we sin, as we daily do, we must never look to God in the name of Christ for pardon, *repent and pray, looking toward the holy temple,* as the Jews were directed to do, (1 *Kin.* viii.) but only believe the Gospel to be true. That is, believe that there is forgiveness with God through the atonement. But we are not to say, *have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.* For this is something more than "a bare belief of the bare truth;" and so is not proper in order to obtain pardon. And so neither at first conversion, nor through the course of our lives, have we any occasion, nor ought we to look up to God in the name of Christ, and pray, saying, *forgive us our debts.* We must only believe the Gospel to be true, and in this belief, according to Mr. Sandeman, we are to be perfectly "passive," "no act, exertion, or exercise of the human mind," is to be in the affair. For pardon at first conversion, and afterwards is, he grants, to be obtained in the same way. (Letters on Theron, p. 418.) A wrong notion of the Gospel, leads Mr. S. to this wrong notion of faith. For if this be the sum of the Gospel, "there is forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners through the atonement, to be by God dispensed according to his sovereign pleasure, in a sovereign way: then in the nature of things, there is ground only for a passive belief of this

Should a soldier, belonging to the army of Prince Ferdinand, steal away into the Prussian camp, and attempt to murder that noble hero, the king of Prussia, to whose glory Prince Ferdinand is most firmly attached! Should this wicked soldier be apprehended, condemned to die, and brought forth to the gallows; and while both armies are assembled to see the execution, and agreed to cry, "away with such a vile fellow from the earth, he is not fit to live," should Prince Ferdinand step forth, and before all the multitude justify the law by which he is condemned to die, and offer a ransom for his life to the acceptance of his Prussian majesty; and then turning to this wicked soldier, should he declare, "O guilty wretch! repent of this thy wickedness, and on thy knees ask pardon of his Prussian majesty in my name, and thy sin shall be blotted out:" would not the meaning of the words be easy to the understanding of all the assembled multitude? Not his repentance, nor his asking pardon in Prince Ferdinand's name, do in the least counterbalance his crime, or pay a ransom for his life. Prince Ferdinand's mediation, ransom, and declaration, are the sole foundation of hope to the guilty wretch. Emboldened by these, he falls at his Prussian majesty's feet, and with a penitent heart, looks up to him for pardon in Prince Ferdinand's name. And, in this way, is forgiven, simply on Prince Ferdinand's account [y]. But no similitude from earth-

truth." There is in fact no room for any "act, exertion, or exercise of the human mind," in the affair. But if the Gospel reveals God as ready to be reconciled to all that come to him in the name of Christ, then no sooner do I believe the Gospel to be true, but I also come to him in the name of Christ. As to what is implied in the declaration of the Gospel, see Sect. vii. and viii. if it should appear, that there is no forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners, while such, Mr. S.'s scheme, must be esteemed fundamentally wrong.

[y] But should the wicked soldier be too stomachful to fall upon his knees and ask pardon in Prince Ferdinand's name, his belief, that in this way pardon might be obtained, would not entitle him to it, but rather render him the most inexcusable man alive. So had an Israelite, bitten with a fiery serpent, believed that whosoever looked up to the brazen serpent should be healed, but not desiring a cure, should he refuse to look up, his belief would not have healed him. So had Peter's hearers, on the day of Pentecost, when pricked at the heart to think that they had murdered the Messiah, refused to *repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ*, notwithstanding the call they had, their belief that he was the Messiah, and that there was forgiveness with God through his name, would not

ly things can fully reach the case before us: because the infinite dignity of the great KING of the universe, against whom we have rebelled, not only renders our past, but even our present guilt, infinitely great. The true convert therefore not only deserves eternal damnation in the highest exercises of repentance, every whit as much as he did before, according to law and strict justice: but also deserves eternal damnation afresh for the imperfections attending his very repentance. The blood of Christ, and the gracious declarations of the Gospel, are therefore in an eminent and peculiar sense, the only foundation of hope there is in his case. But of this more afterwards.

VII. If the design of Christ's mediatorial office, labours, and sufferings, was to do honour to the divine law, and if hereby he has opened a way for the honourable exercise of divine grace towards sinners; then on the cross of Christ, every motive, every encouragement to repentance for sin, and a hearty reconciliation to God, is collected and brought to a point. God is declared to be an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and honour, and universal obedience. The divine law is declared to be holy, just, good, and glorious: our disaffection and rebellion to be altogether groundless and infinitely criminal: and yet we have the fullest proof, that God is ready to forgive, through the blood of his own Son, all those who repent and return to him, in the name of

have entitled them to pardon. And therefore, "a bare belief of the bare truth," is not the whole of what is comprised in the Scripture notion of justifying faith. But, says Mr. Sandeman, (Letters on Theron, p. 417.) "if more than a bare persuasion of the truth be admitted as requisite to justification," the whole of Christianity is overthrown: to which it may be answered, that *Peter made repentance requisite*, Acts ii. 38. & iii. 19. But, says Mr. Sandeman, "the sincere penitent may be saved without any Christ or atonement at all;" p. 89, &c. No: Peter not only said, *repent*, but also, *be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins*. And constantly affirmed, that there is *no other name whereby we must be saved*. Peter's penitents, therefore, could be saved only in the name of Christ. But to say that repentance is before forgiveness, overthrows the whole Gospel in Mr. Sandeman's view; and indeed it does overthrow his whole Gospel, viz. that there is forgiveness with God through the atonement, for penitent sinners, while such, before any act, exercise, or exertion of the mind. But of this more in Sect. v. and viii.

Christ. In which all the motives and encouragements to repentance and reconciliation are virtually comprised. Had the Son of God died, because the law was too severe, to purchase abatements, &c. the cross of Christ itself had justified our disaffection to that perfect rule of right, and our enmity to the divine character therein exhibited. The cross of Christ had declared, that we were right, and that God was wrong. But when he obeys the law himself, and in his own body bears its curse on the tree, in our room and stead, because the law was good, to do it honour; if we still object we have no cloak for our sin. Nay, we must give up our objections, or renounce Christianity. To believe the Gospel to be true, is to give up all our objections as impious and blasphemous; to acknowledge God to be wholly right, and take all the blame to ourselves; to come cordially into the import of Christ's death, is to look upon God as infinitely glorious, and ourselves as infinitely odious: truths sealed by that blood which made atonement, and opened a way for our pardon. And if God is infinitely worthy of supreme love and honour, and universal obedience; and if we never had any reason to be disaffected to him; and if our rebellion from first to last has been entirely groundless; nay, infinitely criminal; and if yet, after all, God is ready to forgive us on Christ's account, and invites us to return and be reconciled through him, and offers in this way to become our God and Father for ever; what further, by way of motive or encouragement, can be presented before our minds, to induce us to repent and be converted, to return and be reconciled to God? And yet, all this is set in the strongest point of light on the cross of Christ, if he died because the law was good, to do it honour. Compare Rom. iii. 25, 26. and 2 Cor. v. 20, 21.

There can now, therefore, be nothing but our disinclination to a reconciliation to God, that can be as a bar in the way of our return. For on God's side, *all things are ready*, and he invites us to come. His *oxen and fatlings are killed*; the feast is prepared, the doors of his house, the gates of heaven are open, and we apostate, hell-deserving rebels, have not only free liberty to return to our allegiance, but are urged, are beseeched, and that by God himself and by his Son,

to be reconciled. Every beauty meets in the divine character, and every excellency in his government; our disaffection is not only groundless, but infinitely criminal; and all this is declared, is sealed and confirmed, by the very blood that was shed to make atonement. Nothing, therefore, can keep us back but our own hearts, nor can the fault be any where but in ourselves. How inexcusable our guilt, how aggravated our damnation, if, after all, we refuse to return and be reconciled!

Should any say, "I do look upon the divine law, holy, just, and good; and I feel reconciled to God." Well: but how came this to pass? "I believed myself delivered from the curse, and that God was reconciled to me." If this is all, you are still blind and deaf to the import of the cross of Christ, which declares the divine character to be perfect in beauty, and his law to be holy, just, and good, previous to the consideration of our being pardoned; and that our disaffection to the divine character and government was inexcusable and infinitely criminal; and would have remained so, had we never been forgiven. It is not the divine character and government, therefore, you are reconciled to; but the whole of your reconciliation consists in a belief that you are safe. And this is not to be reconciled to God: it is only to love yourself. "But it is impossible I should be reconciled to God on any other ground." That is, impossible you should look on the divine character and government perfect in beauty, without a blemish, although thus declared to be, on the cross of Christ, and the declaration sealed with the blood of God's own Son. Christ died *to condemn your sin;* to declare your disaffection infinitely vile: you extenuate your sin, and justify your disaffection; and cry, "it is impossible I should do otherwise; impossible to look upon God as a lovely being, only in belief of his love to you;" which is implicitly to say, that there is "no loveliness in the divine nature, only on account of his love to you." And so, if you are damned, God will be no longer God. Language not of an humble penitent, but of an haughty rebel: not harmonizing with the import of the cross of Christ; but exactly the reverse. For had it not been a becoming, glorious thing in

God to punish sin according to its desert, the death of Christ had been entirely needless.

SECTION V.

Sin an infinite Evil.

AS to the degree of faultiness there is in sin, or in other words, as to the degree of blame-worthiness there is in a creature's becoming disaffected to, and rising in rebellion against, the infinitely glorious God that made him, it cannot be determined by the sentiments of the rebels themselves, who will naturally be apt to extenuate their fault, and justify their conduct. There is no so easy and safe a way to determine this point with exactness as to appeal to the judgment of God, who knows what our obligations to obedience precisely are, and with the greatest exactitude balances the degree of our blame. And besides, it is by his judgment this matter is to be finally decided.

But the divine law, which is a transcript of the divine nature, and which expresses the very sentiments of his heart, and by which he will finally judge the world, in the penalty it has threatened to the transgressor, exactly determines what God's judgment is in this case. In which it is written, *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.* This curse contains all that evil, which the law threatens, and which Christ came to deliver us from, and which the wicked will be doomed to at the day of judgment. What the wicked will be doomed to at the day of judgment, when God will render to every man according to his works, our Saviour has determined in the most express manner, (Mat. xxv. 41. 46.) *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.* It will be more tolerable for some wicked men at the day of judgment than for others, as some are guilty of fewer and less aggravated crimes; (Mat xi. 20.

24.) but however different the degrees of pain will be to different persons, yet the misery of each one will be eternal; i. e. infinite in point of duration. For no one is ever to be released out of hell. For *there is a great gulph fixed,* Luke xvi. 26. and *the fire is never to be quenched* and *the worm never to die.* Mat. ix. 44. 46. 48. for the wicked are to be punished with *everlasting destruction,* 2 Thes i. 9. and as the divine law denounces the curse for the first transgression, for any one sin; so there is consequently no one breach of the divine law, but what in the judgment of God deserves everlasting misery. But everlasting misery is an infinite punishment. And therefore in the judgment of God there is an infinite evil in sin.—Yea, there is no one transgression of the divine law, but what is infinitely evil.

And it must be remembered, that this law, in which the Judge of all the earth threatens eternal misery for any one transgression, for not continuing in all things, was in force and binding on all mankind, antecedently to a consideration of the gift of Christ and the work of redemption by him: and was by God esteemed to be holy, just, and good, and the whole world, Jew and Gentile, were by him looked upon as guilty, their mouths stopped without excuse, no objection against his law, no plea in their own behalf to make: not one word to say. And in this view, he gave his only begotten Son to die in their stead. To deny this, is to renounce the Gospel. And all, who believe that Christ died to save sinners from the eternal torments of hell, must grant, that antecedent to a consideration of his death, they were justly exposed to such a punishment, as otherwise his death for this end had been needless. But if they were justly exposed to such a punishment antecedently to a consideration of his death, then sin, previous to a consideration of the grace of the Gospel, was an infinite evil. But,

I. If sin is an infinite evil, antecedently to a consideration of the gift of Christ, then God is infinitely worthy of supreme love and universal obedience from us, considered merely as being what he is in himself and our Creator. For if he is not infinitely worthy, we cannot be infinitely obliged. And if our obligations are not infinite, we cannot be infinitely to

blame. It is, therefore, the plain import of the divine law, that the God who made us, and whose we are, is an absolutely perfect, and so an infinitely glorious and amiable, Being.—And that, on this account, we are under infinite obligations to love and obey him. Therefore,

That love to God which arises merely from self-love, in a belief that Christ died for me, that my sins are forgiven, and that I shall be saved, is not that kind of love which the divine law requires, but a love essentially different.—For, one wholly blind to the beauty of the divine nature, and at enmity to the divine character as exhibited in the law, and so in the eye of the law, dead in sin, may be full of this kind of love, even as full of it as the carnal Israelites were of joy at the side of the Red sea.

And to deny that God is to be loved by believers with that kind of love which the divine law requires, is to say, that the law is not a rule of life to believers: it is to set aside the divine law and real holiness; and to substitute affections merely selfish and wholly graceless in their room. And this is essence of Antinomianism.

It is true, the gift of Christ, considered as a benefit done to us, lays us under infinite obligations to love God with a love of gratitude. But at the same time, the very nature of the gift supposes, that we were before under infinite obligations to love God for his own excellency, and infinitely to blame for not loving him; as otherwise the gift of Christ to be a curse to redeem us from the curse of the law, had been needless. Now practically to deny the infinite amiableness of the Deity, and our infinite obligations to love him as such; and then to pretend to love God for the gift of his Son, is as though we should say, "God does not deserve the love the law requires. The law was therefore an unrighteous law. But Christ has redeemed us from its curse, and we are glad." Which declaration would be a full proof of our enmity to God and to his Son.

II. If sin is an infinite evil, if not to love the infinitely glorious God our Maker with all our hearts, so as from love to be perfectly obedient to his will in thought, word, and deed, is an infinite evil; then those who are wholly blind to the

holy beauty of the divine nature, and consequently entirely destitute of true love and of true obedience, are in the sight of God, infinitely to blame, for every thought, word, and action. *The plowing of the wicked is sin. The prayers of the wicked are sin. The sacrifices of the wicked are abomination to the Lord.* They are, in the whole frame of their hearts, and in the whole tenour of their lives, contrary to the divine law. Rom. viii. 7, 8. *The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh, cannot please God.* And, ver. 9. this is the character of all who *have not the spirit of Christ.* And therefore, the whole frame of their hearts, and the whole tenour of their lives, is infinitely odious, hateful, and ill-deserving in the sight of God; exactly agreeable to the import of the curse of the divne law.—Therefore,

When once a sinner's eyes come to be opened really to view things as they in fact are, his false hopes, his self-righteous claims will be dropped in a moment; and the justice of God in his damnation be clear beyond dispute. And God's disposition to punish sin according to law, no longer appear as a blemish, but rather as a beauty in the divine character. And *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,* not an ill, but rather a glorious perfection in the Deity. However, these views, and an answerable frame of heart, will not in the least diminish his desert of eternal damnation; any more than the penitence of a wilful murderer will exempt him from the gallows.—For,

III. If sin is an infinite evil, then he who is enlightened in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, believes the Gospel with all his heart, repents, and is converted, still deserves, considered as in himself, and compared with the law of God, that perfect rule of right, eternal damnation as much as ever he did[x], because his present goodness does not in the least

x Some late writers, in their zeal against a self-righteous spirit, hardly dare allow faith to be an act, lest it should be made a righteousness of. Just as if a self-righteous heart could not make a righteousness of a passive as well as of an active faith, and be as proud of his passivity as the Pharisee was of his fasting twice in a week. Was this Paul's way to take down a proud self-righteous heart! who was so skilful and mighty to pull down! No; far from it; he took quite another method, a method in its own nature apparently suited to answer the end.

counterbalance his former badness. Nay, instead of paying past debts, he runs continually deeper into debt; as he still falls short of that perfect love and obedience which he owes to God. And so instead of deserving pardon for old sins, he merits damnation constantly by his new ones. There is therefore absolutely no hope in the case of a true penitent, but from the mere grace of God through Jesus Christ. On the foot of law, there is no more hope in the case of a penitent, than in the case of an impenitent sinner. Because according to law and strict justice, he deserves to be damned now, as much as he did before. For his repentance, which is but of finite worth, when cast into the balance in opposition to his guilt, which is infinite, is lighter than if the smallest atom of matter were flung into one scale, and the whole material system into the other. For there is some proportion between the least atom of matter, and the whole material system; but there is no proportion between finite and infinite. And therefore, as in the eye of law, so in the eye of an enlightened conscience, the most exalted virtue of the most eminent saint stands for nothing; i. e. is absolutely of no weight at all in the least conceivable degree, to counterbalance for any one sin. And so he sensibly needs Christ and free grace along with the chief of sinners.

To deny this, would be, virtually, to give up the whole of divine revelation. For in this view the divine law threatens eternal death, for any one transgression, without leaving any room for repentance to alleviate the sentence. The transgressor is doomed to eternal misery without hope. This is plain fact. Gal. iii. 10. And this law is declared to be holy,

It was to hold forth the divine law in all its strictness, and with all its curses, as holy, just, and good. Witness his Epistle to the Romans and Galatians. Not any distinction between active and passive was ever mentioned by him, or has the least tendency to humble a proud heart. But to view ourselves in the light of the divine law, will give us our true character, and let us see just what we deserve at the hands of God our judge, and our absolute need of Christ and free grace. It was Paul's maxim, *the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.* Nor can any man possibly see his need of Christ, but by the law; and the law considered as holy, just, and good. For to do honour to the law as such, was the design of Christ's mediation, and that without which his mediation had not been needful for the salvation of sinners. And by the law, the most holy and active saint needs Christ as much as the chief of sinners.

just, and good, to be just what in reason it ought to be; and in this view of it the law-giver judged it inconsistent with reason and justice, and therefore inconsistent with the honour of his righteous government, to exempt a sinner from the threatened punishment, in virtue of any atonement of less value than the blood of his own Son. Another plain fact, Rom. iii. 25, 26. He who denies these two facts, must give up the whole of divine revelation. And to grant them, is to grant all that has been asserted.

It is possible that a sinner may be brought to repentance by divine grace before he is forgiven [a]. Yea, it is certain, that no sinner ever was pardoned till he did repent. Luke xiii. 5. Acts iii. 19. But it is impossible, that a sinner ever should be justified under any other notion, than as being ungodly. Rom. iv. 5. For one sin in the eye of the law, and so in the eye of God the judge, denominates a man ungodly, and subjects him to eternal damnation. Gal. iii. 10. Nor can any future penitency make any imaginable satisfaction; he must be justified therefore by God, as being ungodly, or not at all.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon; was the language of the Old Testament. And *repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,* is the language of the New. Not that the penitent Jew, on the foot of law and justice, could by his repentance be exempted from death. Nay, just the contrary did the penitent Jew acknowledge, when he came before the altar, bringing a bull or a goat to die in his room. For "I have sinned, I deserve to die," was the import of his conduct. Not, neither, that the penitent Christian does not deserve the damnation of hell, notwithstanding his penitency; for this, in the most explicit manner, is acknowledged, in *asking pardon in the name of Christ.* For, if he is not so bad as to deserve eternal damnation, he

a This all Antinomians deny: for as true repentance arises from love to God, and implies love to his law, they say, it is impossible to love God or his law, till first we know that our sins are forgiven; and so it is impossible, that repentance should take place before forgiveness. Of which, more hereafter.

does not need that pardon which the gospel offers. Much less does he need the Son of God to die in his stead, that God may be just, and yet justify him. So that to *ask pardon in the name of Christ*, is the most explicit acknowledgment, that eternal damnation is our due by law; and that the law is holy, just, and good, a glorious law, worthy to be magnified and made honourable by the obedience and death of the Son of God [b].

b Some of the chief maxims on which St. Paul reasons throughout his Epistle to the Galatians, to prove that no man can be justified on the foot of his own virtue, are these: "*The divine law requires sinless perfection, on the penalty of eternal damnation for the least defect.* Chap. iii. 10. *There is no other law given.* ver. 21. *If justification could have been obtained by this law, the death of Christ had been needless.* Chap. ii. 21." And from these maxims he cuts off all self-righteous hopes by the roots. To assert, therefore, that there is a law given, by which a sinner may be justified in the sight of God on the foot of his own virtue, short of sinless perfection, and without any need of Christ's atonement, even on condition of sincere repentance, is flatly to contradict the Apostle. It is surprising, therefore, to find so sagacious a writer as Mr. Sandeman, declaring this with such great assurance: and equally surprising that he should think to prove his point from the 18th and 33d chapters of Ezekiel; when every pious Jew knew, that, let his repentance be ever so sincere, yet according to the whole tenour of the Mosiac dispensation, *without shedding of blood there could be no remission.* Deut. xxvii. 26. Heb. ix. 22. See Letters on Theron, p. 89, 90.

If it should be inquired, what led so learned a writer to commit such a blunder? It was in support of his leading design, the darling point in his scheme, viz. That there is forgiveness with God through Christ for impenitent sinners, while such, before any "act, exercise, or exertion of their minds whatsoever." And consequently before repentance. A "passive belief" of which he says, "quiets the guilty conscience, begets hope, and so lays a foundation for love." For if a penitent sinner may be justified on the foot of his own goodness, without any respect to Christ and his atonement, none can stand in any need of Christ and his atonement, but impenitent sinners. And so his main point is proved. For the only design of Christ's death of consequence must be to procure pardon for impenitent sinners, remaining such. For if ever they should be brought to repentance, according to his scheme, they may be justified on the foot of their own goodness, without any need of Christ or his atonement. And accordingly his good man is never brought to true repentance. "All his godliness consists in love to that which first relieved him." (Letters to Mr. Pike, p. 8.) And therefore his godliness does not at all consist in love to God's law, without which there can be no true repentance. And, therefore, he can by no means allow that the 119th Psalm gives the character of David, or is applicable to any other good man, because it abounds with such expressions of love to God's law. To whom then must it be applied? to Christ, he says; forgetting what the Psalmist had said, ver. 67 *before I was afflicted, I went astray.* Which is a full proof that

If the divine law requires that we love God with all our hearts, and yield a perfect obedience to his will; and if our original natural obligations to love and obey him are so great, that according to reason and justice, we deserve eternal wrath for the least defect; and if we measure ourselves by this rule, and judge of our character and desert by this standard, instead of finding any thing about ourselves to recommend us to God, we shall feel that we are infinitely worthy of the divine wrath. And the more penitent any saint in this world is, the more sensible he will be that this is the truth. And accordingly, Saint Paul, who was doubtless the most humble, penitent, broken-hearted saint that ever lived, viewing things in this light, felt, after all his attainments, that he stood in as absolute need of Christ and free grace, as any other sinner in the world. *I through the law am dead to the law. I count all things but loss, that I win Christ, and be found in him.* And in this view he strenuously asserted, that *by the deeds of the law no flesh could be justified in the sight of God.* Not one more than another; not himself, more than the vilest wretch on earth.

Christ, *who never* went astray, is not the person spoken of. (Letters on Theron, p. 55. 117.)

But from Mr. Sandeman's manner of reasoning, (p. 88.) it is easy to foresee that he will object, that if repentance is before forgiveness, no child of Adam can be forgiven. For according to him, this sets pardon "as high above the reach of one whose conscience is awake, as the perfections required by the divine law itself. It must cost me as much labour to come within the reach of it, as to conform my heart to the law of God. Of all corruptions of the Gospel, this is the most dangerous." However, he may be told, that dangerous as he thinks it is, the Gospel was thus corrupted, if he will call it by that name, by Christ and his apostles, who always taught, that repentance is before forgiveness, as will be proved in the sequel. And if he is for an easier way to heaven than Christ and his apostles taught, it is no good sign. Rather, it is the grand characteristic of a popular preacher, how odious soever the name may sound in his ears. So our Saviour declares, Mat. vii. 13, 14, 15.

If he should further object, that the plain design of the prophet Ezekiel was to convince the self-righteous Jews in Babylon, that if they perished in their sins, the fault would be wholly in them; I readily grant it. And one way he takes, to work this conviction in them, is to call upon them to repent, asserting that there is a sure connexion between repentance and forgiveness. Which was no new doctrine, as appears from Lev. xxvi. 40. 42. 1 Kings viii. 46. 50. Prov. xxviii. 13. Isai. lv. 7. Jer. iv. 4. The only question is, whether the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews was mistaken, or not, in affirming, that under the

Wherefore, if saving faith implies in its nature, repentance and conversion, and contains the seeds of every Christian grace; yet it can have no influence into our justification in the sight of God, as our virtue. Because considered as such, it is of no weight to counterbalance our blame, if our blame be infinitely great; no weight at all. The least sand in an hour glass, would do more towards counterbalancing the whole material system, all put into one scale, than the faith, repentance, and all the other graces of the best saint in the world would, towards counterbalancing the smallest sin; if the smallest sin is an infinite evil. And if we say, "that the least sin is not an infinite evil," we must, to be consistent, give up the divine law, and with that, the whole of divine revelation.

We can be *justified by faith*, therefore, no otherwise than, as faith is that, on our part, whereby we are united to Christ, and so become interested in him, in whom alone God is well pleased. Whose righteousness and atonement alone are sufficient to satisfy for our guilt, and qualify us for

Mosaic dispensation, *without shedding of blood there* was *no remission*. Heb. ix. 22.

Besides, if God could, consistent with the honour of his government, have granted remission of sins to a sincere penitent, without any atonement; by parity of reason, he might also as well have granted repentance, without any atonement. And so the death of Christ was wholly needless. Sinners might have had *repentance and remission of sins*, and eternal life, as well without, as with it. And thus *Christ is dead in vain*, and Christianity overthrown, on Mr. Sandeman's scheme. For if the death of Christ was needless, the Gospel, which brings us the news of his death, is a fiction. For it must have been *foolishness* and not the *wisdom of God*; it must have been inconsistent with every divine perfection, for God to have given his Son to die, had his death been needless. Mr. Sandeman therefore must give up his present scheme, or give up the Gospel, or be inconsistent. But how was it possible, that Mr. S. should rightly understand and cordially believe the Scripture doctrine of atonement, while his mind was so full of prejudice against the divine law? Indeed he has not expressed his enmity against the divine law in such a shocking manner as Mr. Cudworth has done; but to an attentive reader it may be plain, they both view it in the same point of light: in itself an ugly law. And all their love to God and his law arises merely from a belief or hope they are delivered from its curse: or rather, strictly speaking, they have no love to God or to his law; but as Mr. S. accurately expresses, "all his Godliness consists in love to that which first relieved him," viz. a belief there was forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners, while such. This he loved; and this love is the whole of his religion.

the divine favour and eternal life. Even as a woman is interested in her husband's estate by marriage, not as it is an act of virtue in her to marry him; but as hereby she is united to him, and becomes one with him. It is true, in the very act of marriage, in which a woman receives a man for her husband, and gives herself to him as his wife, all matrimonial duties are virtually implied: and *as ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him,* (Gal. ii. 6.) is the sum of Christianity. But it is not the engagement of those matrimonial duties, nor is it the performance of them, which, under the notion of a virtue, entitles her to her husband's estate; she is interested in her husband's estate simply by virtue of the relation which takes place in marriage. They two then become one flesh. And so one common interest commences. Eph. v. 32. *This is a great mystery,* is a lively emblem of our union with Christ. For by a true and lively faith, which, in contradistinction from a dead faith, contains every Christian grace in embryo, we are united to Christ, as the branch is to the vine, as the members of the body are to the head, as the wife is to her husband; in consequence of which union, and not for our goodness, we are accepted in God's beloved Son, and that simply on the account of his atonement and merits. And to use another of Saint Paul's similitudes: A Jew had a title to an inheritance in the land of Canaan by birth; not because it was a virtue to be born of Jewish parents; but because he was thereby a child of Abraham. So *we are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ.* And *if children, then heirs.* Gal. iii. 26. 29 [c].

Some seem to think that faith, repentance, and sincere obedience, considered as our own goodness and virtue, give us an interest in Christ, and in the favour of God through him. Which, to make the scheme consistent, supposes that the penitent sinner is considered as being in himself good, and that his goodness is of so great weight in the sight of God, as to counterbalance his badness, and so gives him an interest in Christ. Which implies that his guilt is not acknowledged to be infinite. For if it were, it could not be

c See this subject treated at large, but with great accuracy, in Mr. Edwards' Sermon on Justification by Faith alone.

sert. The degree of ill desert there is in sin, is determined by the penalty threatened in the divine law.

God's giving his Son to die in our stead, to redeem us from the curse of the law, has led some to think that God is not inclined to punish sin according to its desert; whereas his inclination to punish sin according to its desert, induced him to give his Son to die in our stead. When Zalucus made a law, that the adulterer should have both his eyes put out as the punishment of his crime; his inclination to punish adultery, according to what he supposed it deserved, induced him, in order to save his son, who had committed adultery, from losing both his eyes, to consent, that one of his own should be put out instead of one of his. And his consenting to this, and its being actually done, instead of arguing that he was not inclined to punish adultery according to its supposed desert, was really the fullest proof of his inclination so to do, that could have been given. Nor could the supreme King of the universe have given a clearer and stronger proof, that his inclination to punish sin according to its desert was well grounded, fixed, and unchangeable, than to give his own Son to suffer in the room of the sinner, altogether equivalent to what he was exposed to; *to be made a curse, to redeem him from the curse.* And the impenitent sinner may depend upon it, he shall not escape. *For if these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*

Vindictive justice in the Deity, has nothing in its nature inconsistent with his infinite goodness. And his infinite goodness, has nothing in its nature inconsistent with vindictive justice. All the divine perfections are harmonious. Nay, all the moral perfections of the Deity are really but one—GOD IS LOVE.

Love is the sum of that duty which God requires of us in the moral law. The moral law is a transcript of the moral perfections of the divine nature. Therefore, love is the sum of the moral perfections of the divine nature.

GOD is love. Love to being in general. Chiefly to the first, the great, the infinite Being, the fountain and source of all being. And secondarily, to finite beings; and love to virtue, to order, to harmony, in the intellectual system. And

so all his nature is summed up in this edict, the fundamental law in his kingdom, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.* Which is suited to give unto God the glory due unto his name, and to bring all finite intelligences to feel and conduct towards him and one another, as is fit, in which also their highest happiness lies.

To break this fundamental law of his kingdom, is implicitly to turn enemy to being in general; to God, the infinitely great and glorious Being, to the system, to virtue, to order, to harmony; in a word, to all good. Love itself, therefore, as it exists in the Deity, who is at the head of the universe, and whose office it is to govern the world, is a *consuming fire* with respect to sin. And armed with almightiness, and directed by infinite wisdom, is immutably determined to bear testimony against it, as an infinitely odious, hateful, ill-deserving thing. And so the words of the law express the temper of God's heart. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things.* But this fury and wrath is nothing but love. This curse to the sinner, is love to being in general, *i. e.* love to God, and to the best good of the universe. As when a wise and righteous monarch puts a traitor to death, it is not because he delights in the death of his subjects, or takes pleasure in their pain simply considered; but it is because he delights in the honour and safety of his crown, and the general good of his kingdom. And all his loyal subjects, who are affected towards his crown and kingdom, as he is, will see a beauty in his conduct [d].

d Will see a beauty in his conduct, and yet not "delight in the misery" of their fellow-creatures; and so we may see the beauty of vindictive justice, and be affected accordingly, and yet "not delight in our own eternal destruction." Indeed, if an earthly monarch required his subjects, on pain of death, to do what was in its own nature 'utterly impossible,' not through the badness of their hearts, but as being inconsistent with the constitution of reasonable creatures; then, as in this case, no punishment would be deserved; so he could have no motive to punish his subjects, unless he delighted himself in their destruction. And so no beauty could be seen in a monarch's inflicting pain in such a case, unless we suppose it beautiful in him to love the misery of his subjects. And for one doomed to death under such a monarch, to see a beauty in his conduct, would, I own, be the same thing, as to love his own misery. And this seems to be Mr.

For many reasons private revenge is altogether improper and unfit: not that executing righteous vengeance, is in itself a bad thing. We strictly forbid private revenge among our children. "If your brother strikes you, you shall not strike him again," says the father; "but tell me, and I will take care of the matter." So parents order in their little kingdoms, and all the children in the family stand conscience convinced, when a naughty child is corrected by a wise and good father, that the father has done well. And all dutiful children will revere him the more, and love him the better for it. *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men,* says the apostle. An exhortation as full of benevolence as any one in the New Testament. To which he adds, in the same spirit, *dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves.* But why? was vengeance a bad thing in the apostle's eyes? No; but they were not the proper persons. That matter belonged to the infinitely wise God, whose are all things in heaven and earth, and to whom the government of the world appertains. *For it is written, vengeance is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord.* Rom. xii. 18, 19. It is God's province to execute vengeance, and it is a God-like, glorious thing in him to do it.

Cudworth's view of the divine character, as exhibited in his law; to love which he thinks is the same thing, as to "love our own eternal destruction." Mr. Cudworth's notions of the Deity are surprisingly inconsistent. One while, God is supposed to be so much made up of malevolence, that to esteem his character beautiful, is "to love our own eternal destruction." And to love this God, is pronounced "utterly impossible;" yea, "contrary to the law of God." And yet the indisputable duty of mankind: but a duty which none ever did, or ever will, or ever lawfully can do. Another while, God is all made up of love to his creatures, only "disposed to make them happy, and to oppose what is contrary to their happiness;" and so of a character altogether lovely, even in the eyes of the vilest sinners, let them but believe, "that God loves them in particular." And so here are two Gods; the one a cruel, hateful being, requiring on pain of damnation, that we should do that, which is, in its own nature, wicked, "contrary to the law of God." And this God, it is "utterly impossible" to love. The other is a good, and lovely being, who aims at nothing but our happiness; and only requires us to believe that he loves us, and in that belief love him again. And thus it was with the Manicheans in the early ages of the Church, they maintained that there were two Gods, the God of the Old Testament, a cruel, hateful Being; and the God of the New Testament, a good and lovely Being. Further Defence, p. 221. 226.

Wherefore, when Pharaoh, (the type of finally impenitent sinners, Rom. ix. 17. 22.) and his host lay overwhelmed in the Red sea, Moses, inspired by heaven, sang, *The Lord hath triumphed gloriously! Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods! Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness!* Exod. xv [e]. And when all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured and rebelled against the Lord, on the return of the spies, for which they were by God doomed to fall in the wilderness, it was, in the eyes of the HOLY ONE, so glorious and God-like a piece of conduct, that he said, *all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.* Numb. xiv. 21. And when, in the days of Isaiah, God revealed his purpose for their many crimes, to give up the Jews to blindness, and deafness, and hardness, till the land should be utterly desolate, the inhabitants of heaven are represented, as in an ecstacy, crying one to another, *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.* Isai. vi. And when the children of Moab and Ammon, the Edomites and Philistines, and all the neighbouring nations around the holy

e *Glorious in holiness.* Vindictive justice is a holy, and so a glorious perfection. The holiness of the divine nature, inclines him to hate and punish sin. The great evil of sin, consists in its being against God. *Against thee, thee only have I sinned.* Ps. li. 4. And it is chiefly in this view that God hates and punishes it; because it is *a despising God,* (2 Sam. xii. 10.) and it is a glorious thing in God to punish it in this view. Mr. Cudworth thinks, that there is no loveliness in any thing in God, but merely as it "tends to make us happy, and to oppose what is contrary to our happiness." p. 221. If God punishes sin merely for our good, it is lovely, let the punishment be so circumstanced, as to be an act of goodness and kindness to us, and it is beautiful, viewed in this light. But if it be viewed as an act of holiness, as an expression of God's regard to the honour of his great name, and hatred of sin as it is against God, then there is no loveliness in it; and why? Because we naturally love ourselves, but regard not the honour of his great name. And so, to take care of our interest appears beautiful to us; but to take care of the rights of the Godhead, has no beauty in it. And so the atonement of Christ, on this hypothesis, has no beauty in it, considered as doing honour to God and to his law. And so all religion consists merely in selfish affections. And thus when Pharoah was punished for his crimes, it appeared beautiful to the carnal Israelites, as they were safe themselves, and as his destruction was for their interest. But when it came to their own turn, their hearts were full of hatred and heart risings. However, the divine conduct, in their punishment, was as beautiful as in the punishment of the Egyptians. And nothing but criminal blindness could prevent its appearing to them in this light. To be sure, it appeared in this light in the eyes of the HOLY ONE of Israel.

land, who from spite to the true God, and to the true religion, rejoiced in the destruction of Jerusalem, and captivity of the Jews; when, I say, they are by God devoted to destruction, it is constantly represented as a conduct worthy of the HOLY ONE of Israel, and to his honour, by the continual repetition of these words, *and they shall know that I am the Lord*, along through eight chapters together, from Ezek. xxv. And concerning Babylon, say the pious Jews, guided by inspiration, *happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones*. Ps. cxxxvii. 9. And when mystical Babylon shall sink as a mill-stone into the sea, under the vengeance of the Almighty, and thousands be sent to hell at once, all heaven is represented as resounding with loud *hallelujahs*, while *the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever*. Rev. xix. So that nothing can be plainer, than that vindictive justice is a glorious perfection in the divine nature, a beauty in his character, in the sight of holy beings, through the intellectual system. But,

I. If vindictive justice is a glorious and amiable perfection in the Deity, then the whole dark side of things, as some writers phrase it, in his moral government of the universe, is full of light, glory, and beauty. The ejection of the sinning angels out of heaven down to eternal darkness and despair, turning our first parents out of paradise, and dooming them and all their race to death, and the final sentence to be passed on apostate angels and apostate men, at the day of judgment, are all perfect in beauty. The divine character, as exhibited to view in these facts, is altogether glorious, and infinitely worthy of love; for it is a glorious thing in God thus to punish sin according to its desert. Therefore,

It can be owing to nothing but criminal blindness, to the spirit of a rebel, of an enemy, in any of God's subjects, that the glory of his character, as thus exhibited, does not shine into their hearts. It is a full proof they are unattached to the honour of God, and to the welfare of his holy kingdom, and care only for their own private interest.—And therefore,

No sooner is a sinner renewed, by the regenerating influences of the holy spirit, but he begins to see the beauty of vindictive justice, and to be affected accordingly. *The law, as*

a ministration of death, now begins to appear glorious. For now he begins to see things as in fact they be; for now his eyes are opened [f].

f And in this view my Theron is made to say, (p. 194.) "Let all heaven for ever love and adore the infinitely glorious Majesty, although I receive my just desert and perish for ever." But, says Mr. Cudworth, "This is a species of love beyond what Adam had in Paradise, beyond the apostles, the Scripture saints, and even Jesus Christ himself." p. 224. Strange! What! Does not Jesus Christ look upon it as a glorious thing in his Father to punish sin according to its desert? Does not he think his Father worthy to be loved and adored by all the heavenly hosts, although he does so? and will not all holy beings cry *Amen, Hallelujah*, at the last day, when they see the law put in execution? And pray, what is their motive? Is it the beauty of vindictive justice? or is it merely because they are safe, and care for none but themselves? If the beauty of vindictive justice is the motive; then they all view things to perfection, in the same light in which a sinner begins in great imperfection to view them, when his eyes first begin to be opened. But if vindictive justice is not a beauty in the divine character, in their eyes; and if they cry *Amen, Hallelujah*, merely because they are safe themselves, and care not what becomes of others; as must be the case on Mr. Cudworth's scheme, let him consider the consequences. Consequences, which will overthrow the whole of divine Revelation, as will presently appear. And to quote texts of Scripture to prove a point subversive of the whole Scripture scheme, is certainly to pervert them. Besides, Mr. Cudworth is obliged to grant, 1st, that the divine law does in fact require of all mankind without exception, that very kind of love to God, which he condemns in Theron. 2d, That this law is holy, just, and good. And 3d, that to deny the goodness of this law, is to overthrow Christianity, p. 226. 230. And if in regeneration and repentance our eyes begin to be opened to see things as they be, and our hearts to be affected accordingly, then Theron is justified out of Mr. Cudworth's own mouth; and he has no way to avoid this consequence, but to contradict himself, and implicitly give up Christianity, in affirming, that the divine law, in requiring love to God before the pardon of sin, requires, 1st, what implies "love to our own eternal destruction:" and so, 2d, what is "utterly impossible." Yea, 3d, what is in its own nature unreasonable; "inconsistent with the original constitution of reasonable creatures." And so, 4th, what is in its own nature sinful, "contrary to the law of God." And thus, he makes the divine law unreasonable and wicked, that he may justify the sinner in his non-conformity to it. And while he justifies the sinner, he renders needless the atonement of Christ, regeneration, repentance, and pardon, in this case. And thus the whole Gospel is overthrown. To avoid this consequence, he turns short about, and affirms, that the sinner "ought to love God, and is self-condemned if he does not," "utterly impossible and contrary to the law of God," as it is. And in the midst of all this confusion and self-contradiction, he introduces the death of Christ to solve the difficulty, by delivering us from the curse of this good wicked law, and grant a pardon in the midst of this self-justification and enmity, thereby to pacify our minds, and give us a good thought of that God, whose character before it was "utterly impossible" to love. And this is all the regenera-

II. If vindictive justice is a glorious and amiable perfection, then it was a glorious and amiable thing in God, to bruise HIM, and put HIS soul to grief, who had espoused our cause, and appeared as our representative, although he were his own SON. And it was a glorious thing in the Son of God incarnate, to say, *thy will be done*. But if vindictive justice is not glorious, there is no glory in the cross of Christ. And where no glory is, no glory can be seen.

III. If vindictive justice is an amiable, glorious perfection, then the grace of God in the gift or his Son, was free grace indeed. If I was in fact, so criminal, so infinitely odious and ill-deserving, that it had been even a glorious piece of conduct in God to have damned me for my sins, the grace which provides me relief, is mere pure grace; pure grace indeed. God was so far, so very far from being obliged in justice to help me, that it had been a glorious act of justice, if God had said, *depart, thou cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. The grace, therefore, which provides relief, is free and glorious grace. And as the freeness and greatness of the grace arises from this view of the case, so it is only in this view of the case that the freeness and greatness of the grace can be seen. Therefore, those who are wholly blind to the beauty of vindictive justice, are wholly blind to the nature and glory of the grace of the Gospel. And therefore, that idea of free grace, which ravishes an antinomian heart, is a mere imagination, formed in his own fancy, and not the true grace of the Gospel.

IV. If vindictive justice is a glorious and amiable perfection in the divine nature, then God is altogether lovely.

tion he will allow of. And he perverts every text of Scripture he comes across, to support this inconsistent, self-contradictory scheme of sentiments: meanwhile, nothing can be plainer, than that, if God was amiable in the eyes of Adam in paradise, in threatening to punish sin so severely; if he was amiable in the eyes of Christ, in persisting in this disposition after the fall; if to do honour to this character of his Father, the Son of God incarnate died on the cross; if all true believers view Christ in this light, and love him as being thus, his father's friend; then Mr. Cudworth's scheme stands condemned "by Adam in paradise, by the apostles, by all the Scripture saints, with Jesus Christ himself, at their head." Who could not have been bribed by all the joys set before him, to have declared his father's righteousness, had he viewed the divine law in the light Mr. Cudworth does; an unreasonable, wicked law.

There is not one blemish in his character; his character, viewed in every point of light, is perfect in beauty. That is, he is in fact, what he claims to be, BY NATURE GOD. Therefore,

Our disaffection to the Deity is perfectly groundless, and we have no cloak for our sin, but are absolutely without excuse, our mouths stopped, and we guilty before God; even prior to a consideration of the grace of the Gospel. And, therefore,

If now, after we have the Gospel revelation, in which we are invited, kindly and earnestly invited to return to God in the name of Christ, with a promise of divine forgiveness, and even of eternal life through him, we do not return and become heartily reconciled, we shall deserve an aggravated damnation indeed. The heathen world, who never heard of the grace of the Gospel, may, for their disaffection to the divine character, which is perfect in beauty, be with Tyre and Sidon, justly damned; but we, with Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, shall deserve a damnation aggravated beyond expression. *There shall be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.*

To say that vindictive justice is not a glorious and amiable perfection, is subversive of all religion, natural and revealed.

If vindictive justice, is not a glorious and amiable perfection, then there is one blemish in the divine character, one bad property in the divine nature, which yet, it is plain from the whole tenour of his conduct, that God heartily approves of and loves; which therefore must spoil his whole character, and render it on the whole an unamiable character; a character that cannot be heartily liked and cordially loved. For one bad property entirely approved of, and constantly exercised, will ruin any moral character, and render it devoid of all moral beauty.

If it was a bad thing in God to cast out the rebel angels as he did, to eternal pains; the elect angels can never forgive it: but must eternally look on their tortures as the effect of something bad in the Deity, and stand ready to justify their blasphemies, and so will really be on the devil's side, notwithstanding all the bounties of heaven to them. For the

bounty of a tyrant can never win the esteem of noble and generous minds. And how must the death of an incarnate God, on this hypothesis, fill all holy beings with horror. Such a sacrifice as this to tyranny, is beyond imagination dreadful! All the bounties of heaven to the elect from among mankind, can never reconcile them to such a character, unless we suppose them to be absolutely selfish, void of all goodness, while they for ever behold their fellow-creatures, their neighbours, their brethren, their sisters, their sons, their daughters, crying, weeping, wailing, gnashing their teeth, under eternal tortures, all the effect of something bad in the Deity.

So that if vindictive justice in the divine nature, is not amiable and glorious, there is no beauty at all in the divine character, and he never can be loved. And so there is an everlasting end to all religion in the intellectual system. For where there is no love to God, there is no religion.

To say, that vindictive justice is no part of God's moral character, is to give up the Old and New Testament, both at once; as well as to contradict a thousand appearances in common providence. And so is it to plunge into downright infidelity, and is little or nothing short of the grossest atheism.

So that we have our choice to approve the divine character, as it stands in the bible, as being without a blemish, perfect in beauty; or to turn infidels, and sink down into a total uncertainty about every thing in the moral system. To do the first, is the introduction into the Christian life. To do the latter, is to begin to feel that blackness of darkness, which is to be the portion of God's enemies to all eternity; or at least, it is an introduction to it.

Objection. "It is true God's character as exhibited to view in the law, is not amiable, nor can it be loved. But his character, as exhibited in the Gospel, is altogether lovely [g]."

[g] The design of every false scheme of religion, is to render the divine character agreeable to the taste of a carnal heart: but to every carnal heart, vindictive justice appears not a beauty, but a blemish; and such a blemish as spoils God's whole character, and renders it "utterly impossible" to love him. Till then carnal men leave vindictive justice out of their idea of God, at least with

Answer. A hateful character, and a lovely character, are two characters essentially different; nay, contrary to each other. But two characters essentially different, cannot belong to that one God, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. To look upon the character the divine law gives of God as odious; to look upon the character the Gospel gives of God as amiable; and to hate the God of the law, and to love the God of the Gospel; is a kind of religion which puts one in mind of the Manichean scheme, in ancient times; who professed to believe "that there were two gods, the God of the Old Testament, an evil, cruel, hateful Being, and the God of the New Testament, a good, kind, lovely Being."— And if this scheme is not openly espoused by any of the various sects of Christians, in the present age; yet, it seems to be the secret spirit and soul of all the false schemes of religion now in vogue. But all these schemes are, in fact, no better than infidelity. For if Jesus of Nazareth did not heartily love the character of the God of Israel, as exhibited in his law, he did not come from the God of Israel, he was not the promised Messiah, he was an impostor. For on this hypothesis, he was no friend to the God of Israel; but plainly on the side of his enemies, his rebellious subjects. And his mediation, in this view, was an affront to the Deity, an infinite reflection on his character; and so can be of no avail to his followers. And what is all this better than infidelity? But if Jesus of Nazareth did heartily love the character of the God of Israel, as exhibited in his law, and died to assert this

reference to themselves, they cannot love God, or "conceive any loveliness in his nature." Some false schemes declare that vindictive justice is no part of the divine character. God intends to make all his creatures finally happy. Other false schemes declare, that, although it is a part of the divine character, yet it is not to be loved. I am to view God as one that loves me, and merely in that view, am I to love him: but to love vindictive justice is "utterly impossible." Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, imply in their nature, a sense of the beauty of vindictive justice. And so the true Christian loves God's real character; while a wrong idea of God excites the love of every unregenerate man. A kind of love to such a kind of a God, as is consistent with reigning enmity against the true God. Rom. viii. 7. *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

character to be good, and do it honour; then no man can be his disciple, but he who loves that character too. To hate that character, is to be an enemy to the cross of Christ. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

When Christ was upon earth, the Pharisees, the most religious sect of people then in the world, joined very unanimously to hate his character, pretending at the same time great love to the God of Israel. But our Saviour and his apostles insisted upon it, that if they really loved God, they would love him; and if they hated him, it was a full proof they hated God; because both their characters were alike. John viii. 19. 29. 48. Chap. xv. 21. 24. Chap xvi. 1, 2, 3. 1 John ii. 22. 23. But the Pharisees had quite lost the true meaning of the law of Moses; so that with the greatest truth it might be said, that they did not believe Moses' writings. John v. 47. And consequently had lost a right idea of the true God, as exhibited in his writings. Meanwhile they had formed a new scheme of religion in their fancy, and got themselves to believe it to be the same that was taught by Moses, a scheme which justified such characters as theirs; and as was their scheme of religion, such was their notion of God. And having thus made themselves a God of a character to suit their own hearts; this God they loved. But they hated Christ, who was the express image of the true God. A full proof they hated the true God himself. Even so now also it is in this present age. Christ has been gone to heaven a long time, and the true sense of his Gospel has been in a manner totally lost by many, who have professed a great regard to his name. And new Christs, and new Gospels, have been invented more agreeable to the taste of an apostate world; but of a character essentially different from the God of Israel. And so it is come to pass that men are prepared to distinguish between the character of God as exhibited in the law, and the character of God as exhibited in the Gospel; and hate one and love the other; as characters essentially different; nay, even contrary the one to the other; not knowing that it was the very design of the mediatorial office and work of Christ, to assert his Father's character, as exhibited in the law, to be an absolutely perfect character, without spot or

blemish; although it is expressly affirmed, that he was *set forth to be a propitiation* for this very end, *to declare his Father's righteousness.* Or, in the language of the prophet, to *magnify the law and make it honourable.*

I pray that it may be considered, that if vindictive justice is essential to the divine character, and if it is in its own nature a bad thing, an unamiable property, that this one blemish will spoil God's whole character: and it will be impossible for any holy being in the universe to love him. None can love him but stupid, selfish creatures, who believe that he loves them, and who care not what becomes of others. For, if it must have rendered God's character hateful to have punished me according to his law; it must, for the same reason, render it hateful to punish any other according to his law. So that on this hypothesis, if I am saved, yet God's character must appear odious in my eyes to all eternity, unless he save all others. So I shall hate God's character in heaven, while I view the torments of the damned. And all the love I shall have to him, will be simply from a selfish, narrow principle: because he has elected, and loved, and saved me. For I can see no beauty in his character. For in fact there is none, if vindictive justice be a bad and an unamiable property. For one bad property entirely approved of, and constantly exercised, will render any character entirely devoid of moral beauty.—Therefore,

The rapturous joys of sinners, who are blind to the beauty of the divine character as exhibited in his law, arising merely from a belief that God loves them and will save them, have nothing of the nature of holiness or love to God in them; nor will this kind of religion, although raised to the highest perfection, in the least qualify a man to live in heaven. To view things as they do there, would kill this kind of religion in a moment. A sight of the state of the damned would put an end to all their good thoughts of God, in the twinkling of an eye. And while heaven, ravished with the beauty of the divine conduct, resounds with hallelujahs, they would begin to cry, "No, no, he is a tyrant! see, yonder is my neighbour, my brother, my child, in torments!" And away would they flee, to their proper company, side with them, and join

in their blasphemies. Unless we suppose this sort of converts, should they come to heaven, so entirely destitute of any thing like benevolence, as to feel perfectly easy at the misery of others, merely because they do not care for any but themselves.

If vindictive justice were not glorious, it would be impossible, that the Son of God incarnate should make such a glorious appearance as he will at the day of judgment. He would rather be dressed in sackcloth. Impossible, that he who wept over Jerusalem, would now, without the least reluctance, pronounce the final sentence on the wicked. And impossible, that this sentence should be succeeded with unmixed, endless joys, among angels and saints, beings perfect in benevolence, and the most generous goodness.

But neither Christ, nor angels, nor saints, will, at that day, look on the controversy which has subsisted between God and his rebellious subjects, as it is generally looked upon now among mankind. God's infinite worthiness of supreme love and honour, and universal obedience, and the infinite evil of sin, will then be seen; and the wisdom, holiness, justice, and goodness of all God's ways will be brought to light; and the unreasonable disaffection, and inexcusable obstinacy of an apostate race will appear in their true colours. The whole history of mankind will be opened, and all the opposition made to the truth, from the blood of Abel, to the blood of Christ, nay, to the blood of the last martyr, will be brought into the account, with all the despisings of the divine authority, threatenings, warnings, calls, &c. So that all holy beings will be fully and perfectly satisfied, nay, perfectly pleased, with the last sentence on the wicked. And it will be so far from lessening their happiness, that it will give them new additional joys. And they will all join in saying, *Amen, Hallelujah; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; and true and righteous are his judgments. And again they will say, Hallelujah: while the smoke of their torments ascends for ever and ever.* And all this in perfect consistence with the purest benevolence. Yea, all this will be the native result of benevolence, of love to God, and to the general good of the uni-

verse; as the wicked will be viewed as enemies to being in general, to God, to the universe, and to ALL GOOD.

SECTION VII.

GOD, who is the supreme, all-sufficient good, can, consistently with his honour, and is willing to become a God and Father, and everlasting portion, to all who return to him through Jesus Christ.

THAT God is an absolutely perfect, and so an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, is the first article of faith in the creed of every true Christian. And the second, which in point of importance, is like unto it, is, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. On these two articles hang all the law and the Gospel, all the doctrines of natural and revealed religion. As it is written, John xvii. 3. *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* A variety of consequences from these two fundamental truths have been already pointed out; and we now go on to add—

I. If God is an absolutely perfect, an infinitely amiable and glorious being, of necessity he must be the supreme, all-sufficient good.——And,

II. If Jesus of Nazareth is his Son, it is equally certain that he can, consistent with his honour, and is willing to become a God and Father and everlasting portion, to all who return to him through Jesus Christ.

I. If God is an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable being, of necessity he must be the supreme all-sufficient good. He must be the supreme good; for it implies a contradiction to say, that any thing can be better than the best. And God cannot be better than he is. Absolute perfection cannot be more perfect than it is. Infinite wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth, armed with almighty power, constitute a character absolutely perfect: a beauty without a blemish, a beauty infinitely bright. In the

knowledge, love, and enjoyment of such a being, therefore, must consist the greatest possible happiness.

And at the same time, the absolute perfection of the divine nature, renders the deity infinitely amiable and delightful in himself; the whole universe exists by him, is entirely in his hands, and under his government, and at his control. In him all *live and move, and have their being. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.* And *his throne is established in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all. His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.* So that he is the fountain and source of all being, possessed of authority absolutely supreme, the sum and source of all good, and therefore in the highest sense absolutely all-sufficient. To have God for our God, is infinitely better than to be ourselves set up at the head, and made Lords of the whole universe.

There are things of an earthly nature which are good in their places, as health, food, raiment, friends, &c. which we receive from God, the original Lord of all things; and for which therefore we ought to be thankful to him, and improve to his glory. But they are not fit to be the portion of our souls. And if we set our hearts upon them as our supreme good, we are guilty of idolatry. And if we set them up for our God, and bow down our souls to them, we act as stupid and sinful a part as those who, of old, bowed down to idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. And when we come to die, they will prove as insufficient for our happiness, as the gods of the heathen did for theirs. Nay, the society of angels and saints in heaven, leave God out of the account, would by no means afford that refined and sublime, that complete and stable happiness we need, to give us full and perfect satisfaction; much less will the society of saints on earth. Nay, leave God out of the account, and angels and saints, and the whole universe, would sink into nothing in a moment. So that God is not only the supreme all-sufficient good; but strictly speaking, the sum total of all good. Psal. lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none on earth I desire besides thee.* Therefore,

To love, honour, and obey the deity, as the divine law requires, is as much our privilege as it is our duty. And nothing but our criminal blindness to the absolute perfection, to the infinite glory and amiableness of the divine nature, prevents its appearing so to our souls.

Suppose a father of an unblemished character, of consummate wisdom, the owner of a large estate, at the head of a numerous family, for the children to love his character, respect his person, to put an implicit trust in the wisdom of his conduct relative to family affairs, to rejoice in his supremacy, power, and authority, over his household, and that all the estate is in his hands, and all his family dependent on him, and in their temper and behaviour to be all dependence, subjection and obedience, is as much their privilege, as it is their duty. And nothing but a criminal state of mind can prevent its appearing so in their eyes. To be disaffected to such a father's character, to be discontented under his government, to rise in rebellion, to go and leave his house, is as imprudent and foolish, as it is undutiful and wicked; and must appear so to the prodigal child, as soon as ever he comes to himself. And now to repent and return, and become a dutiful child, must appear not only the fittest, but the happiest thing in the world. And to have such a man, with such an estate in his hands, for a father, is better for a child, than to have all the estate put into his own hands, and to be rendered supreme and independent. So for us sinners to repent and be converted, to return to God through Jesus Christ, and to have him for our God and Father, is better, yea, infinitely better than to have all the universe put into our hands. And to love his character, delight in his exaltation, rejoice in his supremacy and independency, and in the infinite wisdom and absolute perfection of his universal government, and to be full of holy fear and reverence, submissive, resigned, obedient, as dutiful children, is not only an honour due to God from us, but also our highest privilege and happiness. It is heaven on earth. It is even the beginning of eternal life in the soul. And nothing but criminal blindness can prevent its appearing so to us all. Ps. lxxvii. 22. *So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee.*

I WILL *be their God*, as it is in its own nature the greatest possible good; so it is the grand blessing of the Gospel, in which all the rest finally terminate. Heb. iv. 10. Rev. xxi. 7. Regeneration, repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification, considered under the notion of Gospel privileges and blessings, all summarily consist, in our being delivered from an everlasting separation, in temper and state, from the deity, with its consequences; and brought to an everlasting enjoyment of God, as our father, friend, and portion. By the fall we lost God, we lost his image and favour, we lost a heart to love him, and a right to enjoy him; we became disaffected to him, and we forsook him, and were doomed to depart, to be for ever given up to the power of sin, and to be monuments of the divine wrath for ever. In regeneration, repentance, faith, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification, we are recovered to the image and favour of God, to a heart to love him, and a right to enjoy him, and to the actual love and enjoyment of him as our God, our supreme good, our father, friend, and portion. *Everlasting* or *eternal life*, is the phrase most commonly used to express summarily all the blessings of the Gospel, in contrast with *eternal death*, the wages of the first, the wages of every sin. John iii. 15, 16. 36. Chap. iv. 14. Chap. v. 27. Chap. vi. 40. 47. Rom. vi. 23. &c. And our Saviour tells us wherein *eternal life* consists. John xvii. 3. *This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* God the Father, who is eminently Father and Lord of heaven and earth, (not exclusive of the Son and spirit,) is considered as the sum and fountain of all perfection and of all good. Ps. lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth I desire besides thee.* Christ is considered as the way to the Father, the only way in which sinners can come to the enjoyment of him. John xiv. 6. *I am the way, no man cometh to the Father but by me.* And the holy spirit is considered, as the person by whom we are quickened, raised from the dead, and brought to God throught Jesus Christ. Eph. ii. 18. *Through Christ we have access by the spirit of the Father.* And when

the work of redemption is completely finished, and all the redeemed brought to heaven, *God will be all in all* through eternal ages. 1 Cor. xv. 28. Therefore, *I will be their God*, is the grand blessing of the Gospel, in which all the rest finally terminate. This, therefore, is in an eminent manner that *treasure in a field*; Mat. xii. 44. that *Pearl of great price*, (ver. 46,) for which every divinely enlightened soul, willingly and joyfully *sells all things*. God himself, to be loved and enjoyed through Jesus Christ, is the royal feast, shadowed and represented by the *marriage a king made for his son*, which was so slighted and despised by those who were called, and kindly and earnestly invited to come. Mat. xxii. And this is that *bread to be eat in the kingdom of heaven*, that *great supper*, from coming to which, *they all with one consent desired to be excused*. Luke xiv. This is that *recompense of reward*, the everlasting enjoyment of God, which Moses had in view through all his trials, *for he endured as seeing him who is invisible*. Heb. xi. 26, 27. And by the way, this is the true reason, that the *great feast*, (Mat. xxii.) was slighted, and the *great supper*, (Luke xiv.) despised by the Jews, who all reckoned of going to heaven, as much as other carnal people do. Even, this is the true reason, that the happiness proposed in the Gospel, is as much disrelished by carnal hearts, as the holiness which is there urged. For the happiness is a holy happiness, a kind of happiness which an unholy heart entirely disrelishes. Therefore, *they made light of it, and went their ways*. They looked upon it as a burden, and *desired to be excused*. For in strict truth there is no such heaven as carnal hearts imagine, when ravished to think their sins are pardoned, and heaven their own. Their God, their Christ, their heaven, are all the fruit of their own imaginations, and satan's delusions. For the heaven of the Gospel carnal men would not have, if they might. Yea, they perfectly disrelish it, they absolutely reject it, they obstinately refuse it, and many will sooner kill the messengers who invite them, than come to the feast. Thus our Saviour states the case, Mat. xxii. 6.——But to return:

If the absolute perfection, the infinite glory and amiableness of the supreme Governor and Lord of the universe, ren-

ders him the supreme and all-sufficient good; then, as soon as our eyes are opened to see his absolute perfection, his ineffable glory and beauty, he will begin to appear such to our souls. For now we begin to see things as they be. For this is what is meant by our eyes being opened. And if God does appear such to our souls; to quit all idols, to return to him, to love him, to live to him, to be for him, to have him for our God and father, and portion, in time and to eternity, will be esteemed the highest possible privilege, if we may.—But,

The same absolute perfection and infinite glory and beauty of the divine nature, which renders God the supreme good, renders him infinitely worthy of supreme love and delight, and our disaffection infinitely criminal, and us infinitely ill-deserving: so that it would be even a glorious act in God to banish us for ever from his presence. Nor according to his holy law, that perfect rule of right, is any thing else to be expected. Nor in this view is there any hope in our case; yea, it does not appear how he can, consistent with his honour, do any less than cast off for ever, creatures so infinitely vile.——But,

II. If Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, it is certain, beyond all dispute, that the holy and righteous governor of the world can, consistently with his honour, and is willing to become a God and Father and everlasting portion to any, the vilest and the worst, that shall return to him through Jesus Christ.——For,

If the absolutely perfect being has given his own Son, of equal glory with himself, to be incarnate, to obey and die in the room of sinners, to magnify his law and make it honourable, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; and if he has finished the work appointed him to do; and if in testimony of his Father's acceptance and full satisfaction, he hath raised him from the dead, yea, set him at his own right hand in heaven, where he appears in the character of a great high priest, with his own blood, and ever liveth to make intercession; in consequence of which by the decree of heaven, repentance and remission of sins, are ordered to be preached to all nations in his name, and whosoever will,

may come, however vile and ill-deserving; yea, all are invited to come, and prayed and beseeched to be reconciled to God, who is represented as ready to receive the returning sinner, as the Father was to receive his returning prodigal. If all this is true; and all this is true if Jesus is the Messiah; then beyond all doubt God can, consistently with his honour, and is willing to receive to favour, and to become a God and Father to all, whoever they be, that shall return to him through Jesus Christ.——Wherefore,

As it appears to the enlightened soul the fittest and happiest thing imaginable, to return to the God of glory, as his rightful Lord and supreme good, to live to him and upon him, if he may; and as in this view of things, he is assured that liberty is granted to any, the vilest and the worst, to return through Jesus Christ; so now, with the prodigal son in Luke xv. he does return, and find acceptance. And thus the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ begins eternal life in the soul, agreeable to our Saviour's words in John xvii. 3. *This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*

And from these truths thus briefly stated, we may see, how great the good offered in the Gospel is; how free it is offered; the sin and madness of rejecting it; the absurdity of believing we have a title to heaven, when the very heaven offered is rejected with abhorrence.

I. The good offered in the Gospel is of infinite worth and value. Yea, it is the sum and substance of all good in the universe. For even God himself offers to be our God, and Father, and portion. This was originally man's supreme good in paradise. This was forfeited by our apostacy. The second Adam, our near kinsman, has redeemed the inheritance, and opened a way for us to come to a lawful possession. The curse of the law doomed us to an everlasting separation from God, but the blood of Christ has opened a way for us to come to the everlasting enjoyment of him.

In heaven they enjoy God as the supreme good; they are ravished with the glories of his nature, charmed with the beauties of his character, exquisitely delighted in his axaltation, in his supremacy, in his universal perfect government,

crying, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory; and they are as flames of fire, all love, life, activity, in the delightful service of their glorious King. Even so here on earth, we, who have been outcasts, are invited to return, come home, and be reconciled to the God of glory, the God that made us, and view his nature and all his conduct as they do, become of the same temper, and members of the same family, and join in like holy employments and pleasures. *Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in Heaven.* There is a great high Priest entered into Heaven with his own blood; and in his name, we, who deserve to be numbered with the damned, are invited to come with boldness within the vail, and to begin our heaven on earth.—To this feast we are invited to come, and we may eat and drink as much as we please. We have full and free liberty to have access to the fountain of all good, the God of glory, the supreme Lord of the universe, to view the beauty of his character, to be charmed with the glories of his nature, to rejoice that he is God over all blessed for ever, that he reigns and will for ever reign, that his government is universal and absolutely perfect; and through Jesus Christ, we may come and put our trust under the shadow of his wings, and in his name look up to him for all things, and love and cleave to him, and delight in him with all our hearts; and devote our whole lives to his service, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; pressing toward the mark for the prize, (the everlasting enjoyment of God,) of our high calling of God in Jesus Christ. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ; and the end will be eternal life. And,

II. All this is offered freely, without money, and without price, to us infinitely unworthy and ill-deserving, through Jesus Christ. *Come, for all things are ready*[h]. Yea, it is

[h] If we are invited to a feast by a neighbour, the invitation gives us a good right to go. And if God invites us to repent, return, and be reconciled to him, the God of glory, the supreme good, through Jesus Christ, and enjoy him as the portion of our souls, the heavenly feast, it gives us good right to do so. Even as good a right as the Israelites had to take and eat the manna which lay around their tents. Of this there can be no dispute. But all these invitations give us no right nor warrant to believe that our sins are pardoned and God reconciled to

urged upon us, we are prayed and beseeched to be thus reconciled to God; and by every motive from duty and interest, from God and Christ, from heaven and hell, we are pressed, we are compelled, we are in a manner forced, to come in. Having not only verbal declarations, that *whosoever will may come*; but the highest possible evidences from facts, that God can, consistently with his honour, and is willing to receive those who do come. The gift, the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of his Son, is more than words, than promises, than oaths, to demonstrate that God is sincere and in earnest. So that there is on God's side no bar, no difficulty in the way, all things are ready, and we may come to the feast and welcome. In the universe there is nothing of the nature of an hinderance or impediment, which can prevent our coming, are we ourselves but inclined to come.—But,

III. If through mere disinclination to the deity, to the God that all heaven loves, the God of glory, we make light

us while impenitent, while we refuse to come to the feast to which we are invited, and even despise and hate it. Had God expressly declared, "if you will believe your sins are forgiven, they shall be forgiven. Here I offer you pardon as your own, impenitent as you are, only believe I thus offer it, and that this offer makes it yours, so as that you may with a good warrant believe it is your own, and enjoy the comfort of it as such; and according to your faith, so shall it be to you. I pray you, I beseech you, believe and take it home to yourself, impenitent as you are, and you never shall be disappointed." Had God thus declared, it had been another case; but there is not one tittle in the bible that looks that way. Yea, instead of this, God has expressly declared, *except ye repent ye shall all perish.* Therefore, *repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*

And this may help the weakest Christian to see through the mist, that Mr. Cudworth raises, p. 250. Note, the grand objections against their notions of faith, Mr. Cudworth has done nothing to remove. Yea he has not had courage to look them fairly in the face. According to their scheme, 1st, "I a sinner out of Christ, am condemned by the law, and under the wrath of God," agreeable to John iii. 18. 36. And this is the very truth. And in the view of this truth, they say, "I am necessarily full of hatred and heart-risings against God." So that, (2.) it is "utterly impossible" that I should ever love God until I first of all know that "God is reconciled to me, loves me and will save me." And yet they say, (3.) that "I a sinner out of Christ, have no evidence from Scripture, sense, or reason, that God is reconciled to me, loves me, and will save me, nay, so far from it, that in fact I am condemned, and the *wrath of God abideth on me.*" However, they affirm, (4.) that "I a sinner out of Christ, just as I am, am firmly

of the feast, and go our ways, turn our backs upon God, refuse to return and be reconciled, even after a way has been opened for it by the blood of his own Son, and after such methods have been used to persuade us; it will be the most aggravated kind of wickedness in the universe, and a degree of folly and madness not to be paralleled in any other part of God's empire. And to persist in our disaffection to the divine character from year to year, and to refuse to be reconciled to our dying hour, must render us worthy of such a punishment, and prepare us for such self-condemnation, inward remorse, and anguish of heart, as no tongue can express. Then will be accomplished on impenitent sinners the words which are written in Prov. i. 24. 31. *Because I have called, and ye have refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh, &c.* And all holy beings in the universe, convinced of the justice and wisdom

to believe, that God is reconciled to me, loves me, and will save me." And, (5.) "God stands bound by his promise, that I shall never be disappointed." This is their scheme fairly stated: against which, among other things, I object, (1.) That their faith is presumption. A believing without evidence. There being no evidence that "God is reconciled to me, a sinner out of Christ." (2.) Their faith is downright delusion. Believing a lie, viz. That "God is reconciled to me, a sinner out of Christ, loves me, and will save me." While in truth every sinner out of Christ is condemned now, and will, dying as he is, be damned hereafter. (3.) God has no where in the bible given the least hint, that if "sinners out of Christ do firmly believe, that God is reconciled to them, loves them, and will save them, it shall be unto them according to their faith: they shall never be disappointed." There is not one text of Scripture that looks that way, but multitudes expresely to the contrary. Thus stands the case. Now men may dodge, and skulk, and hide, and raise a dust, and fling, and cant, and call bad names; but by cool and fair reasoning, they never can get over these difficulties. And it is plain they feel they cannot. Let any one read my Letters and Dialogues, and Mr. Cudworth's answer, and judge for himself. According to their scheme, I must believe that God is reconciled to me, loves me, and will save me; because otherwise it is utterly impossible to love him. And I must believe this while in the height of my enmity, because it is this belief which begets my first love. This belief then takes place in the heart, while dead in sin, and full of enmity to God. It is the act of an unregenerate, carnal heart. And it makes a carnal heart feel well; and no wonder it does. And these good feelings are supposed to be the Christian graces; when in fact they are the good feelings of a carnal heart, comforted by the belief of a lie.

of the divine conduct, will join to cry, *Amen, hallelujah. While the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever.*

IV. How great is the absurdity of men's believing they have by the Gospel a title to heaven, when they reject the very heaven offered in the Gospel with abhorrence! The heaven offered is the everlasting enjoyment of God through Jesus Christ. Every one at enmity against God's real character, as exhibited in the law, and declared to be absolutely perfect on the cross of Christ, rejects this heaven with abhorrence! This feast is no feast to him. He is so far from a relish to those heavenly dainties, that his soul loathes this food. To say, that men may come to God by Christ, and find rest and satisfaction in him, while at the same time they are enemies to his real character, is as absurd, as to say, men may come to a feast and eat with pleasure, when they perfectly disrelish every thing set before them. It is true, one who is an enemy to the divine character, may be ravished in a belief his sins are pardoned. And this he may call a feast. And this belief he may call eating: and with this eating he may be satisfied, so as to live contentedly without God in the world. Yea, his contentment and comfort supposes him to be ignorant of the real character of the true God. But it is absurd to suppose one should choose the true God for his supreme good through Jesus Christ, while at enmity against his real character. For men will not choose that for the object of their delight, which in their hearts they do not like. Nor will men desire a Mediator to bring them to the enjoyment of that which they have no appetite for, and which they do not desire to enjoy. While men are enemies to the divine character, they have no inclination to come to him through Christ, rather their aversion to come, is equal to their enmity to his character. Yea, that God should actually become the supreme good and satisfying portion of a sinner, who is of such a taste, as that God's real character can give him no delight or satisfaction, but the contrary, is a plain contradiction. We must love an object, or we cannot enjoy it. We must be suited, pleased, enamoured with the divine character, or we cannot enjoy the Deity. On this account therefore it is absolutely necessary, we become new creatures.

For *except a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.* A sinner could not enjoy heaven, were he admitted and allowed to live there for ever.—Besides,

Although God can, consistently with his honour, pardon and receive to favour the sinner who returns to him through Jesus Christ, and stands ready to do it; yet, it is equally true, that he cannot, consistently with his honour, pardon, and receive to favour, a sinner who refuses to return, while going on obstinate in his rebellion; nor is he at all willing to do it. Christ did not die, that impenitent sinners, while such, might be forgiven, and received into the divine favour. God can no more pardon an impenitent sinner, consistently with his honour, than if Christ had never died. The decree of heaven is fixed, and cannot, and never will be, revoked, *except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.* But as this point is of great importance, and is generally denied by Antinomians; so it shall be taken into more particular consideration.

SECTION VIII.

Repentance is before forgiveness.

IF God is an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and honour, and of universal obedience; and if our disaffection to the divine character and rebellion against God, is altogether inexcusable and infinitely criminal, agreeable to the voice of the divine law, and to the import of the cross of Christ; if God the great governor of the universe views things in this light, and in this view calls unto us from heaven to confess our sins, repent and turn unto him with all our hearts; if these things are so, and they are so if the bible is the word of God; then the meaning of his words is certain, the ideas designed to be conveyed by them are determinate. To repent, beyond dispute, is to change our minds as to the divine

character, to lay aside our prejudices, to open our eyes, and begin to look upon God as he is, an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and honour, and of universal obedience, and in the light of his glory to begin to view our disaffection and rebellion as altogether inexcusable and infinitely criminal, and in this view, cordially to take all that blame to ourselves which God lays upon us, and to be affected accordingly. Saying "righteous art thou, O Lord, when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest. Should justice take place, no iniquity could be imputed unto thee. It would not be a blemish, but a beauty in thy character, and all heaven ought for ever to love and adore thy glorious majesty, should I receive my just desert and perish for ever. But thou canst have mercy on whom thou wilt, through Jesus Christ. To thine infinite grace and self-moving goodness through him I look. *God be merciful to me a sinner.*" Repentance stands then in opposition to all our former prejudices against the divine character; and in opposition to that sin-extenuating, self-justifying, law-hating, God-blaming disposition, which reigns in every impenitent soul. God is seen in his beauty; the divine law, as a ministration of condemnation and death, appears glorious; our disaffection and rebellion infinitely criminal. We justify God, approve his law, condemn ourselves, accept the punishment of our iniquity, as worthy of God; and thus we confess, repent, and turn unto the Lord, looking only to free grace through Jesus Christ for pardon.

A man may think himself to blame for Sabbath-breaking, lying, cheating, drunkenness, &c. who never thought himself to blame for being disaffected to the divine character. Also a man may think himself to blame for not believing that Christ died for him in particular, that God loves him, that his sins are pardoned, or for his being unaffected in this belief, who never thought himself to blame for not loving God as an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being. Some may be sorry wherein they think themselves to blame through fear of punishment, as was the case with Judas: others who believe their sins are pardoned, may, from a principle of natural gratitude, be sorry wherein they think

themselves to blame, as was the case with Saul, when David spared his life. 1 Sam. xxiv. 16. 19. Saul *lifted up his voice and wept*, &c. Chap. xxvi. 21. *Then said* Saul, *I have sinned, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.* But he who is ignorant of the beauty of God's true character, is blind to the chief thing wherein his blame lies. And while men do not see their blame, they will see no occasion to repent.—And should any charge sin home upon them in such a case, they would justify themselves in their hearts.

The divine law, which requires us to love God, the absolutely perfect, the infinitely glorious, and amiable being, with all our hearts, and yield a perfect obedience to his will on pain of eternal damnation, is holy, just, and good: our blindness to his beauty is wholly criminal, our sin-extenuating, self-justifying pleas, are of no weight, all our objections against the divine character and law, are only the language of enmity against the glorious monarch of the universe, we are entirely without excuse, and infinitely to blame. These all are facts. And thus God viewed our case when he gave his Son to die; and thus he views our case when he calls us to confess our sins, repent and turn unto the Lord; and in this light, therefore, must we view our case, if ever we become truly penitent. Every sin-extenuating, self-justifying plea, every objection against the divine character and law, is a declaration that we are so far from repentance, that as yet we do not think that it belongs to us to repent, in the sense we are called to in the Gospel; in this case we do not confess, but cover our sins.

In true repentance our eyes begin to be opened to see things as in fact they are. God's character infinitely amiable, and our own infinitely odious; his law wholly right; and our ways as wrong and criminal as that supposes. And in this view we begin to take all the blame to ourselves [i].

i Question. "How can a finite mind see an infinite object?"

Answer. Not by a full comprehension of it, only by a high sense and lively conviction that it is infinite. As thus, suppose we could see with our eyes, a man, for the sake of one sinful pleasure, deliberately leap head-long down into a lake of fire and brimstone, which he and we knew would never be quenched, and out of which there could be no escape, and in which, by God's almighty power, he would be for ever held up in existence, his sense of feeling quick and

True repentance is therefore in consequence of the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, and of a nature specifically different from any kind of sorrow for sin a man can experience who is at enmity against God.

Sin is the thing to be repented of; and sin is a transgression of the law. And the first and chief thing required in the law, is supreme love to God. And therefore want of supreme love to God, our disaffection to his character, and rebellion against him, is our great wickedness, which we have to repent of. But it will not be in our hearts to repent, unless we truly see our blame. We cannot truly see our blame, unless we see that which chiefly renders us to blame. But that which chiefly renders God worthy of love, is what chiefly renders us to blame for not loving God. And so it is the amiableness of the divine nature which chiefly renders us to blame for not loving God. It is the amiableness of the divine nature, which chiefly renders God worthy of love. It is a sense of this, therefore, that discovers to us the great evil of sin, and shows us the reason we have to be sorry and repent; and which therefore primarily lays the foundation of true repentance, and without which no repentance is true. If I blame my neighbour for being groundlessly disaffected to

lively, we should pronounce the man guilty of infinite folly. We might see and know that his folly was in fact infinite, although we could by no means fully comprehend the thing. So in this sense, we are capable of seeing and knowing that God is infinitely lovely, and we infinitely odious and ill-deserving, how far soever we be from a full adequate idea of infinity. We are capable of as great a sense of our infinite obligations to love God, as we be of the infinite dreadfulness of eternal misery. In legal conviction a sinner begins to have some lively sense of the infinite dreadfulness of eternal damnation; so in regeneration and repentance, we begin to have some lively apprehension of God's infinite amiableness, and our infinite odiousness. Some say, "We should leave all infinites out of our scheme of religion." And so we might, if we were in no connexion with infinites. To be consistent, these men should deny the infinite glory of God the Father, the infinite evil of sin, the eternity of hell torments, the divinity of Christ; and then when thus our connexion with infinites is at an end, the word, and all notion of the thing, may be excluded out of religion; but not till then. As soon as these men will prove, that God is not an infinitely amiable Being, and that we are to die like the beasts, I will say nothing more about infinites. Till then I shall say that the sinner, who by rebelling against God, runs headlong into eternal destruction, is guilty of infinite folly, as to his own soul, as well as of infinite wickedness towards his Maker, the infinitely glorious Governor of the universe.

my character, I shall not, I cannot, look upon him as a true penitent, till, beginning to look upon my character as I think he ought to, he begins to blame himself as I do. It is contrary to common sense, to suppose, any other kind of repentance to be true and genuine And if any man abuses me, in name or estate, through disaffection to my person, no penitency for those abuses can be esteemed genuine, so long as the disaffection from which they arose remains in full strength. I appeal to the universal sense of mankind, who, when it comes to their own case, are every one in this opinion. On this ground it was that David put no confidence in Saul, notwithstanding all the tears and penitency which his generosity extorted from him. He did not suppose that that kind of repentance was any certain sign that he was a new man. Yea, he had rather venture himself with Achish, king of Gath, a Philistine, a Pagan, than with him. 1 Sam. xxvi. and xxvii.

As want of love to God, together with disaffection to the divine character, has influence into that whole course of wickedness which mankind in general live in; so when they are in Scripture called upon to repent of particular sins and turn to God, their want of love to God, and disaffection to the divine character, as manifested in those particular sins, is to be repented of; and a hearty reconciliation to the divine character is implied in the repentance they are called unto. Thus the frequent idolatries of the children of Israel, for which they are often called upon in the Old Testament to repent, were manifest instances of want of love to the God of Abraham, and proofs of their disaffection to his character. So the Jews, hating and murdering the Son of God, the express image of his Father's person, for which they were on the day of pentecost called upon to repent, was a manifest instance of their want of love to God, and proof of their disaffection to his character. And there is no sin whatsoever that any man is guilty of, but what is an instance of disrespect to God, and disregard of his authority. Therefore it was said in the case of David's sin, that *he despised the Lord, and despised the commandment of the Lord.* And therefore, whenever any one is called upon to repent of any particular sin and

turn to the Lord, it is to be understood in this view. He hath sinned against God, despised the Lord, and despised the commandment of the Lord, treated the God of glory, the great King of the universe, with contempt. This is his crime; on this account he is chiefly and above all to blame. And that which renders him infinitely blame-worthy, is, that God whom he despised, is by nature God, an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and honour, and universal obedience. And so in this point of light is the true penitent to view his transgressions, and take blame to himself. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.* Wherefore a sense of God's loveliness is the first and chief spring, and source of true repentance, as this brings into view the great evil of sin. Even as the truth of the Gospel is the only foundation of hope in the true penitent's case. And thus the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, lays the foundation of all religion. John xvii. 3. And let it be remembered, that the same Gospel which we believe, was for substance revealed to Adam, and believed by all true penitents from the beginning of the world. These things being premised, I proceed to prove,

That repentance is before forgiveness. And whosoever will be at the pains to look the bible through, will find, that this is a doctrine taught by Moses and the Prophets, by Christ and his Apostles, nor is there any one point of revealed religion more plainly held forth. Let us begin with Moses.

"And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes which I command thee this day for thy good? for the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments alway. That thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD." This is a specimen of their rule of duty. Deut. x. 12, 13. 17. Chap. xi. 1. and xxviii. 58.

"And it shall be, on the day when you shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaister them with plaister. And thou shalt write upon them all the words of his law—very plainly. Half the tribes standing on Mount Gerizzim, and half the tribes on Mount Ebal. The Levites shall speak and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice, "Cursed, cursed, cursed, twelve times going, all summed up in, 'Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them; and all the people shall say, Amen." Which curse, according to St. Paul, comprised eternal damnation in it, even that eternal misery which Christ redeems his people from by his death. So that, besides being cursed is his basket and his store, in the house and in the field, and in all his earthly enjoyments; he dying under the curse of the law and wrath of God, must be for ever miserable in a future state.—So infinitely great was the evil of not loving and obeying the Lord their God. Deut. xxvii. Gal. iii. 10. 14.

In what way now was an Israelite to obtain pardon at the hands of a great God? The case is plain; according to the Levitical law, once every year, on the great day of atonement, the high priest, in behalf of all the congregation, was to take a goat for a sin-offering, kill it, and bring the blood within the vail, and sprinkle it upon and before the mercy-seat; for without shedding of blood there was no remission; for the law was holy, just, and good. And in token of repentance, as what must precede forgiveness, he was to lay both his hands on the head of a live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, and thus put them upon the head of the goat to be sent away into the wilderness. And all these iniquities thus by confession put upon the goat, he bore away into a land not inhabited. And it afterwards became a proverb among the Israelites, *he that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.* Lev. xvi. 15. 22. Prov. xxvii. 13 For as this was done on the great day of atonement for all the congregation; which day by the way, was to be wholly, from evening to evening, spent in fasting and deep repentance; *And what-*

soever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, so far from being pardoned, that *he shall be cut off from among his people.* Lev. xxii. 26. 32. I say, as this was done on the great day of atonement relative to the iniquities of the congregation in general; so, if any particular man at any time committed a sin, he was to bring his bullock, and in token of confession and repentance, to lay his hands upon his head, and substitute it to die in his room; the plain import of all which was, "I have sinned, the law is holy, just, and good: I deserve to die, and have no hope, but from the mere mercy of God through the atonement." And now the bullock was slain, the blood sprinkled, the body burnt; sacrificed in the sinner's stead, and so atonement was made, and his sin forgiven. Lev. iv. But if he had not only sinned against the great God, walking contrary to him, but also in his sin injured his neighbour, he must first, as became a true penitent, make restitution to his neighbour, before the sacrifice of atonement was to be offered. Lev. vi. 5. Mat. v. 23, 24.—And if, without repentance and restitution, like a hypocrite he came before the Lord with his sacrifice, he would be so far from obtaining forgiveness, that it was a proverb in Israel, *The sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.*—And relative to all instances of offering sacrifices, still going on impenitent in their sins, God plainly declared his utmost abhorrence Isai. i. 10. 20.

And if a man is truly penitent, he has not only an heart, with the utmost freedom to make restitution to those he has injured in name or estate; but also has an heart, with equal freedom, to forgive and love those who have injured him, although, instead of penitency and restitution, they even continue to hate, to curse, and to use him despitefully; therefore, our blessed Saviour plainly teaches, that unless we love such our enemies, we cannot be the children of God; Mat. v. 43. 46. And expressly declares, *If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* Chap. vi. 15. Which cuts off all impenitent sinners from pardon. For it is plain our Saviour means such a kind of forgiving those that trespass against us, as is peculiar to true penitents. For he says, ver. 14. *If ye forgive men their trespasses, your*

heavenly Father will forgive you. And accordingly he taught his disciples to pray, *Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,* (ver. 12.) with an apparent design to seclude all unhumbled, impenitent sinners, who have no heart truly to forgive others, from any hope of forgiveness, while in their present state. See this further confirmed from Mat. xviii. 21. 35. Mat. xi. 26. No persons in the world are more bitter, spiteful, unforgiving, than some who firmly believe their sins, past, present, and to come, are all forgiven. If they love their own party, who love them; yet they are of a very unkind, unfriendly, bitter spirit towards their opponents. Repentance humbles the heart, and makes men of a forgiving, benevolent, tender, friendly disposition: but when an impenitent sinner, through the delusion of satan, becomes confident that he is a favourite of heaven, it naturally increases his pride. And from pride proceeds a contentious bitter spirit. But to return to the law of Moses.

God by the mouth of Moses told all the congregation of Israel, (Lev. xxvi.) that vengeance should pursue them so long as they continued impenitent in their sins. "If ye will not hearken unto me," &c. (ver. 14.) "I will appoint over you terror," &c. (ver. 16.) "and if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins." ver. 18. "And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you, according to your sins." ver. 21. "And if ye will not be reformed," &c. "I will punish you yet seven times more for your sins." ver. 23. 24. "And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; then I will walk contrary unto you also, in fury." ver. 27, 28. "Ye shall perish among the heathens." ver. 38. But if after all this, they should become truly penitent, then God would forgive them. "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and also that they have walked contrary unto me; and that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into he land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept the punishment of their iniquity; then

will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land." ver. 40, 41, 42.

See, to the same purpose, Deut. xxx. 1, 2, 3. "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, &c. with all thy heart and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion on thee," &c. Compared with Ezek. xxxvi. 25. 33. Where God declares concerning the Jews in Babylon, that he will first bring them to repentance, and then restore them to their land. *In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the city*, &c. And in this view, read Daniel's confession and prayer, in the behalf of the captive Jews. Dan. ix. 1. 19.

And as this was the true spirit of the Mosaic dispensation, that repentance is before forgiveness; so Solomon in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, which was planned on that dispensation, and may serve so show the true nature of it, expressly and repeatedly holds forth this doctrine, that repentance is before forgivness. One cannot well see in how strong a point of light this is set, without reading the whole praver. 1 Kings viii. The temple was a type of the Son of God incarnate. God dwelt in it, as afterwards he did in the man Christ Jesus. *My name shall be there.* ver. 29. And so in all their prayers, the penitent Jews *looked towards the holy temple*, and then God heard in heaven his dwelling-place. "When thy people Israel shall be smitten down before the enemy, because they sinned against thee, and shall turn again unto thee, and confess thy name, and pray and make supplication unto thee in this house; then hear thou in heaven, and forgive," &c. ver. 33, 34. "When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they sinned against thee, if they pray towards this place and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, &c. then hear thou in heaven, and forgive," &c. ver. 35, 36. "If there be in the land famine, pestilence, &c. whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there

be; what prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this house; then hear thou in heaven and forgive, and do and give to every man according to his ways, (i. e. according as he appears to be penitent or not,) whose heart thou knowest." Ver. 37, 38, 39. "If they sin against thee, and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives, unto the land of the enemy, far or near; yet if they bethink themselves, in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee, in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, we have sinned and done perversely, we have committed wickedness; and so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee towards their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name; then hear thou in heaven, and forgive." Ver. 46, 47, 48, 49, 50[k].

Yea, Solomon lays it down as a universal maxim, *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.* Prov. xxviii. 13. And not even David, the man after God's own heart, could be exempted, when he sinned; he must confess and repent, before he could be forgiven, and be followed with terror and an-

k Some, to evade the force of these plain texts, have pretended, "that the repentance insisted upon in Lev. xxvi. and 1 Kings viii. was merely an ungracious repentance, which could entitle only to the removal of outward judgments, but not to the favour of God and eternal life." But they might as well say, that a gracious repentance was no where required, nor pardon and eternal life promised, from the beginning of Genesis to the 8th chap. of 1 Kings, and so exclude all who lived before that period from any hope of eternal salvation. For they may be challenged to find any texts more express than these. The truth is, that in the Jewish dispensation, which was altogether *shadowy*, the earthly Canaan was an emblem of the heavenly; the temporal curses, of the eternal curses; and their sacrifices of atonement, of the great sacrifice of Christ; and their temple, of the Son of God incarnate; and the penitent believer was not only exempted from outward and temporal, but from spiritual and eternal evils. It is certain Saint Paul viewed the Jewish dispensation in this light, from Gal. iii. 10. 29. and from the Epistle to the Hebrews throughout.

guish until he did. Ps. xxxii. 3, 4, 5. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old; through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavey upon me. My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."——And,

Isaiah, that evangelical prophet, who cries to every one that is athirst, to come without money, in the same place does as plainly teach, that repentance is before forgiveness. Isai. lv. 7. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."—And,

Jeremiah preaches the same doctrine. Jer. ii. 5. "Thus saith the Lord, what iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they have gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" Ver. 11. "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people hath changed their glory, for that which doth not profit." Ver. 19. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee. Know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts." Chap. iii. 12. "Go and proclaim these words towards the North, and say, return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you." Chap. iv. 1. "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me." Ver. 3, 4. "Thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah, and Jerusalem, break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, lest my fury come forth like fire."—And,

Ezekiel, inspired by the same spirit, speaks the same language. Chap. xviii. 30, 31, 32. "Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit: For why will ye die, O house of Israel? for I

have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." Chap. xxxiii. 11. "That the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel." All exactly agreeable to the language of Solomon's prayer, before cited. 1 Kings viii. 46. 50[1]. To the same purpose see also, Hos. xiv. 1, 2, 3. Joel ii. 12. 18. But to pass on to the New Testament:

John the Baptist, who was sent to prepare the way for the holy, heavenly kingdom of the Messiah, into which no man could *enter* unless *born of water and of the spirit*, (John iii. 5.) preached in the wilderness of Judea, saying, *repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. As if he had said, "Such is the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, so holy, so like to that kingdom which is in heaven, that no impenitent sinner, while such, can be a member of it, or share in its blessings. Therefore, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand: the Messiah will soon make his appearance; repent, and be prepared to receive him." Thus he preached, and *many of the children of Israel* did *he turn to the Lord their God*, and so *made ready a people prepared for the Lord Jesus*. Luke i. 16, 17. For when the Messiah made his appearance, although many were filled with a temporary joy, yet not one received him as the Messiah, but those who were *born of God*. John i. 11, 12, 13. 1 John v. 1. This doctrine of repentance John preached to all the people, to the Pharisees, to the Sadducees, to the Publicans, soldiers, &c. and whosoever came, confes-

[1] To affirm, as two late writers, (Mr. Sandeman, and after him Mr. Cudworth,) do, that every true penitent may be forgiven absolutely without any atonement at all, is implicitly to affirm that the Old and New Testaments are not from God; the chief design of both which being to teach, that *without shedding of blood there can be no remission*. And to bring the 18th and 33d of Ezekiel to prove the point, is to suppose, that Ezekiel was not inspired by the same spirit which inspired the other sacred writers. Mere law promises life to nothing short of sinless perfection, and curses the man that fails in the least point. Deut. xxvii. 26. And there is no deliverance for true penitents from this curse, according to the Gospel, but by the blood of Christ, Gal. iii. 10. 14. And therefore, the captive Jews, when brought to repentance, were directed to look and pray towards the holy temple, and in this way hope for pardon, 1 Kings viii. And to suppose that Ezekiel in Babylon, taught them to expect pardon in a way contrary to the dispensation they were under, is to suppose him a false prophet.

sing their sins, he admitted to baptism, as an external sign of the remission of sins. First they must repent, and then be baptized for the remission of sins. And thus John preached *the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;* placing repentance before forgiveness, just as Moses and the prophets had done before him. Mat. iii. 1. 12. Mark i. 5. Luke iii. 3. 14.—And,

Jesus Christ taught the same doctrine. *Repent ye and believe the Gospel,* Mark i. 15. *I came to call sinners to repentance,* Luke v. 32. *There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth,* Luke xv. 7. I came to *heal the broken hearted,* Luke iv. 18. 21. *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,* Mat. v. 4. But *except ye repent, ye shall all perish,* Luke xiii. 3. 5. And this doctrine he exemplified at large in the parable of the prodigal son, who comes to himself, repents, and returns to his father, and so obtains forgiveness. Luke xv. 17. 20. Yea, now he is exalted in heaven to be a prince and a Saviour, he communicates these blessings in the same order; he gives *repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins,* (Acts v. 31.) and he observed the same order in his commission to his apostles, to preach in his name *repentance and remission of sins* to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Luke xxiv. 46. And accordingly,

The apostles began on the day of Pentecost, being all filled with the Holy Ghost, to preach at Jerusalem, in the same order. Acts ii. 38. *Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins* [m]. And as they began, so they went on. Acts iii. 19. *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* And when Paul was converted to Christianity, and sent to

[m] As to Acts ii. 38. some object, "that the 3000 had a saving faith, and were justified by that conviction, that Jesus was the Messiah, which pricked them to the heart with a sense of their guilt, as being his murderers, before they did repent." But if so, they had a right to baptism before they repented. For a saving faith gives a right to baptism. Acts viii. 37. But it is plain Peter calls upon them to repent first, before baptism; nor did he baptize any but those who appeared to receive his word gladly. That kind of faith, therefore, which was before, and without repentance, as in Peter's judgment it did not entitle to baptism; so neither to pardon and salvation: for it was an acknowledged point in the apostolic age, that that faith which entitles to salvation, entitles to baptism.

preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, it was, to *open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins.* Acts xxvi. 18. And accordingly, he went forth and preached every where, that they *should repent and turn to God,* (ver. 20.) testifying both to Jews and Greeks, *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.* Chap. xx. 21. And as to those who shut their eyes, stopped their ears, and hardened their hearts, and were given up to destruction, in the days of Isaiah, of Christ and of his apostles, their sentence runs thus, in which is clearly taught, that accord to God's established method of dispensing pardon, repentance is before forgiveness. *Lest they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them.* Is. vi. 10. Mat. xiii. 15. Acts xxviii. 27. For what is meant by their being healed is declared, (in Mark iv. 12.) *and their sins should be forgiven them.*

So that this doctrine has been taught by Moses and the prophets, by Christ and his apostles; and if one should attempt to make a collection, there is doubtless as great a number of scripture texts, which represent repentance as necessary to pardon, as there is that represent faith as necessary thereto. And we may with as good a face, and with as much consistence with scripture language, affirm, that we are forgiven before faith, as that we are forgiven before repentance. And it is plain, that the repentance spoken of through the Scriptures, as being before forgiveness, is not an ungracious, unsaving repentance: but a gracious saving repentance; because pardon is constantly connected with it. To these proofs from Scripture texts, may be added these Scriptural arguments. N. B. All, except the grossest sort of Antinomians, acknowledge that faith is before forgiveness; as the Scriptures so expressly declare, that *he that believeth not, is condemned,* and *the wrath of God abideth on him.* John iii. 18. 36. If therefore, it can be proved that repentance is essential to faith, it will follow that repentance is before forgiveness.

Argument I. To believe the Gospel to be true with all the heart, is before forgiveness; but repentance is implied in be-

lieving the Gospel to be true with all the heart. Therefore repentance is before forgiveness. That repentance is implied in believing the Gospel to be true with all the heart, is evident.—For,

The import of the cross of Christ is, "that God is an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, infinitely worthy of supreme love, and honour, and universal obedience; that the divine law is holy, just, and good, a glorious law, worthy to be magnified and made honourable; that our disaffection to the divine character and rebellion "against God, is infinitely criminal;" as hath been already proved. Sect. IV. But with all our hearts to come into these sentiments, and cordially believe them to be true, is to begin to repent, in the Scripture sense of the word. As hath been also already proved, in the beginning of this section, and in sect. III. Indeed, to believe these truths by the dint of external evidence, against the grain of the heart, as the devil does, doth not imply repentance, nor will such a faith entitle to pardon. But to believe them with all the heart, cordially to come into these sentiments, is what Saint Paul means by *repentance toward God*. Acts xx. 21. And hence we may see the true meaning of our Saviour's words, *repent and believe the Gospel*. For we cannot believe the Gospel to be true with all the heart, without repentance. And hence that phrase of the apostle, 2 Tim. ii. 25. In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if peradventure God will give them *repentance to the acknowledging of the truth*. *Heresy* is altogether of a criminal nature, a *work of the flesh*, and reckoned up along with *idolatry* and *murder*. Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. Impenitent sinners cordially love error, but they hate the truths of the Gospel. Nor can they be brought to believe them with all the heart, unless *God give them repentance*. And therefore repentance is implied in faith, and so is before forgiveness.

Argument II. To look to the free grace of God, in the name of Christ, for pardon, is essential to that faith in Christ's blood, which is before forgiveness; but repentance is implied in thus looking to God for pardon in the name of Christ. Therefore, repentance is before forgiveness.

All after acts of faith, with respect to the pardon of sins committed after conversion, are of the same nature with the first act of faith; as is evident from Paul's bringing the example of David to explain and prove his point, whose sin and repentance were long after his conversion. Compare Rom. iv. 6, 7, 8. with Psalm xxxii. But saints are directed to look to God for the pardon of daily transgressions. Mat. vi. 12. *Forgive us our debts.* And in John xvi. 23. Christ has taught his disciples to look to God *in his name* for all things; and so for pardon among the rest. So David prays for pardon, (Psalm li.) and so every penitent Israelite was directed to pray for pardon, looking towards the holy temple, (1 Kings viii.) which was a type of Christ.

But to look to God for pardon in the name of Christ, implies repentance. Cordially to ask for the pardon which the Gospel offers, is cordially to acknowledge we need that pardon; which is cordially to own that we are to blame as the Gospel supposes, which is to begin to repent; and to ask in the name of Christ, is to acknowledge, that we are not fit to be pardoned; considered in ourselves, are too bad; yea, are so bad, that justice calls for our destruction, nor can God consistently with his honour forgive us but through the blood of his own Son. Which supposes that we have a true sense of the great evil of sin, in which repentance radically consists.

We cannot from the heart look to God for pardon in the name of Christ, only as we in our hearts feel that we are to blame, and deserve to be punished according to the true import of law and Gospel. But cordially to come into this view of ourselves, so as from the heart to say with the publican, *God be merciful to me a sinner*, is true repentance. Luke xviii. 14. It is the character of an impenitent sinner to hide and cover his sins; but he that confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. So far as one is cordial in his confession, so far he does actually give up his sins, and begins to forsake them. No impenitent sinner from the heart will own himself to blame in the sense in which he is charged by God in his law, nor in the sense the Gospel supposes, when it calls him to repent and offers pardon. And while one will not cordially own himself to blame as he is

charged, nor own he needs the pardon which is offered, he cannot from the heart look to God for it, much less look in the name of Christ. To say otherwise, evidently implies a contradiction. Compare 1 Kings viii. 46. 50. with Acts xx. 21.

Thus from express Scripture texts, and from these scriptural arguments, the point stands proved, that repentance is before forgiveness. Some objections have been already obviated; the rest we will now proceed to state and answer.

Obj. 1. "We read of some, who are represented as exercising repentance, in a sense their sins are already forgiven." Ezek. xvi. 63. Luke vii. 36. 48.

Ans. Very true. And no doubt it is thus with all true converts. Their repentance, instead of ceasing, is always increased by a sense of divine forgiveness. Compare Lev. xxvi. 40, 41. with Ezek. xvi. 63. But where do we read of any whose sins are forgiven while they continue impenitent, enemies to God, and obstinate in their rebellion? No where. Rather this is the united voice of all divine revelation, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.* And therefore, *repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*

Obj. 2. "If Acts iii. 19. will prove repentance and conversion to be before forgiveness, it will equally prove, that none are forgiven till the day of judgment, which is the *time of refreshing*, there referred to."

Answ. Whatsoever entitles a man to pardon, according to the Gospel in this present time, will entitle him to pardon when Christ shall come to judge the world at the last day. For he will judge the world then according to the Gospel. Therefore, those who repent and are converted now, exclusive of all impenitent, unconverted sinners, shall be publicly owned by Christ at that time. But if the Gospel pardons impenitent sinners now, Christ must accept them then; for he must judge the world according to the Gospel. And he who hath a title to heaven according to the Gospel must be admitted then. And therefore, if impenitent sinners have a title to heaven according to the Gospel, into heaven they will go. For the Judge will, in honour to himself, be obliged to admit all who have a title according to his own Gospel. And

therefore if the Antinomian sense of this text is true, Peter had no occasion to say, *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshing shall come.* Rather he ought to have said, "believe that your sins are blotted out, impenitent and unconverted as you are, and it shall be unto you according to your faith, when the time of refreshing shall come: for God stands bound by his promise, that you shall not be disappointed."

Objec. 3. "A true penitent is a good man, and may therefore be justified on the foot of his own goodness, and therefore need not *believe on him that justifieth the ungodly.*" Rom. iv. 5.

Answ. No impenitent sinner will cordially own himself ungodly in the sense charged upon him by his judge: no impenitent sinner, therefore, is willing, or ever did *believe on him that justifieth the ungodly,* in the sense the Gospel invites us to; as was proved, p. 143, 144, 145[n]. Besides, if arguments will not do, yet facts are stubborn things. And it is a plain fact, that David was a true penitent, and was pardoned after he repented. Ps. xxxii. 3, 4, 5.; and yet David was not a good man in such a sense as that he could be justified on the foot of his own goodness, according to St. Paul. Nay, just the reverse: for from this very instance of David, Paul proves

n N. B. Antinomian converts, when they believe their sins are forgiven, do not believe that those sins are forgiven, which they in fact stand charged with by the divine law. For they do not think themselves guilty of those sins. They justify themselves in that in which the divine law chiefly condemns them. They say, that it is "utterly impossible," yea, "inconsistent with our original constitution, and with the law of God," to yield obedience to the first and great command, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.* And if I, an unpardoned sinner, do not deserve eternal damnation for not loving God with all my heart, I do not need the pardon the Gospel offers. Rather the offer of such a pardon, is an injury to me. It supposes me to blame when I am not to blame. For if "there is no loveliness conceivable" in the divine nature, till God is reconciled to me; and if it is impossible, "utterly impossible" to love him; and even "contrary to the constitution of a reasonable creature, and to the law of God," I cannot be at all to blame for not loving him, nor do I in this case need any pardon at all; nay, the curse of the law in this case must needs fill me with hatred and heart-risings in spite of my heart. Nor can I forgive my Maker, and feel well to him, until he delivers me from the curse. So that an Antinomian convert, is at the greatest distance from seeing that he needs the pardon which the Gospel offers. See Sect. ix.

that we are not justified by our own goodness, but by *believing on him that justifieth the ungodly*. Rom. iv. 5, 6, 7, 8. And Abraham had been a true penitent above twenty years, as all parties acknowledge, when it was said of him, that *he believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness*; which is the other fact by which St. Paul illustrates and proves his doctrine of justification. The objector, therefore, quite misunderstands St. Paul, whose real meaning has been already stated, Sec. V. He whose heart is agreeable to the import of this objection, never yet saw the great evil of sin. For in the objection it is virtually denied to be an infinite evil.—Socinians and Deists openly deny the infinite evil of sin; and on this ground deny the necessity of an infinite atonement. Antinomians are not so consistent; for they profess to believe an infinite atonement, and yet virtually deny sin to be an infinite evil.

Objec. 4. "To say that repentance is before forgiveness, disconcerts my whole scheme of religion, and razeth the very foundation of all my hopes. For it is granted on all hands, that true repentance ariseth from love to God. But to love God before my sins are pardoned, is impossible. For it is my believing that my sins are pardoned, that induces me to love God. When I can believe that Christ died for me in particular, and that my sins are forgiven, then I can love God and repent. But to repent before forgiveness, is new doctrine to me."

Ans. True, it is granted that repentance arises from love to God. And therefore, if repentance is before forgiveness, love to God is before forgiveness too. And that this effectually overthrows the objector's whole scheme, is also true beyond dispute. And as it is plain, that Christ ordered repentance and remission of sins, in this order, to be preached in his name to a sinful, guilty world; and in this order the apostles preached them; so no man has any warrant from the Gospel to preach or to believe forgiveness of sins, in any other order. Nay, he who believes his sins are forgiven before repentance, refusing to give credit to the word of God, he believes a lie; and all religious affections begotten by this belief, are founded in falsehood, and are an abomination in

the sight of God. And thus it will appear when Christ comes to judge the world according to his own Gospel.

Objec. 5. "But are we not justified by faith alone?"

Ans. We are justified by Christ's righteousness alone. If you speak of that which qualifies us for and recommends us to the divine favour, pardon, and eternal life; neither faith nor repentance have, in this sense, any hand in our justification. To say otherwise, is to contradict law and Gospel, and in effect to give up the whole of divine revelation. As has been already proved, Sec. V. "True, but are we not interested in the righteousness of Christ, by faith alone?"

2. There is a kind of faith, which is, in its own nature, alone as it first exists, unattended with any one Christian grace; and through the whole period of its existence, it is alone. It begins to exist without repentance and conversion, and it continues to exist without a holy life. This is called, James ii. 26. *a dead faith.* As the body without the spirit is dead, so *faith without works is dead* also. ver. 17. It is *dead being alone.*

Being alone.—By being alone, the apostle does not mean that it is unattended by any kind of affections. Even the devil's faith, the apostle observes, is not alone in this sense. He not only believes, but also trembles. And many who have a dead faith, a faith which proves unfruitful, and so apparently and evidently a dead faith; yet, as our Saviour observes, *receive the word with joy,* and endure for a while. So the Israelites *believed the Lord and his servant Moses* at the Red sea, and *sang his praise, but soon forgat his works.* Their faith was not of such a kind as would answer the end to carry them through the trials before them. When it came to be proved, it was found to be a dead faith. It was in its own nature dead, from the first, although it did not appear to be dead till afterwards. Their joys were graceless joys. They had no true love to God in their hearts. That is, no love to God's true character. All their religious affections were merely from self-love, excited by a sense of their great deliverance, and the expectation of soon arriving to a land flowing with milk and honey. So their faith was unattended by any one divine virtue; it was alone, in this respect, at first:

and so, of course, it proved to be a faith without works; that is, without any holy works. For their faith was not without works of any kind. Nay, they were zealous and very forward in building the tabernacle, every one contributing of his own free will, enough, and more than enough. But all from selfish principles, expecting ere long to march for the promised land. But no sooner were they disappointed, than at once all their seeming goodness turned into blasphemy. Whereas Moses, after he was secluded from the promised land, loved God as well as ever, and was as faithful in his service. For he really loved the God he believed in, he loved his true and real character, and was heartily interested in the honour of his great name. And this love gave him life and spirit, and naturally made him prayerful and active. And thus his faith worked by love. Without this love, his faith had been as dead and inactive as the faith of the carnal Israelites. But his supreme love to God, whom he constantly had in view, as it were seeing him who is invisible, made his faith a living faith. For he loved God so entirely, that it appeared to him, of all things in the universe, the best, to be wholly devoted to his interest and honour, as long as he lived. Yea, to love and enjoy him to perfection for ever, was the very recompense of reward he had in view, in the world to come. Whereas the carnal Israelites, the more they knew of God's real character, the more they hated it; till they came to wish themselves back again into Egypt; yea, to wish they had died in Egypt, rather than had any thing to do with the God of Israel.

Faith *without works* is dead. Without works—where there is no love, there are no works, in the Scripture-sense of the word. *This is the love of God, that ye keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.* It is a pleasure to imitate a character which charms our hearts, to honour a person we greatly esteem, and please one we greatly love. The duties of a Christian life are only practical expressions of love to God; they are nothing else than love to God, and reduced to practice. Love to God is the life and soul of every good work. Where there is no love to God, all our works are *dead works*, in the Scripture-sense of the

phrase. They are graceless, selfish, hypocritical works. So that faith without works, without a course of holy obedience to all the divine commands, is a faith which is without love to God in the heart. And so it is a faith which is without a sense of the supreme, infinite amiableness of the divine nature; without a sense of which, there can be no true sense of the infinite evil of sin. And so it is a faith without repentance in the first moment of its existence, and a faith without works in the whole period of its existence. And so in its own nature, a dead faith. And that a man cannot be justified by this kind of faith, is evident, not only from the epistle of James, but from all the forecited texts of Scripture, which teach that repentance is before forgiveness.

3. Repentance is implied in the very nature of that true and living faith, by which alone a sinner is united to Christ, and interested in his righteousness and atonement, and so entitled to pardon, justification, and eternal life. This has been already proved, (p. 143, 144, 145.) and shall be now still further confirmed.

It is said, concerning the apostolic converts, on the day of pentecost, (Acts ii.) that they *gladly received the word*; and it is manifest that in doing so, they became true penitents and true believers both at once, in the estimation of the apostles. Compare ver. 38. 41. 44.

There are some truths of such a nature, that they may be believed with all the heart, may be received for true, gladly, and be acted upon as such, without repentance. Thus in a time of great scarcity of bread on an island, the news of a plentiful importation of corn, to be distributed among the inhabitants without money and without price, to whosoever comes, may be received gladly, and believed with all the heart, and the people may flock together to the place of supply, without any thing like repentance. So did the Gospel simply bring the news of deliverance from hell, and of eternal joys in heaven, to be the portion of every child of Adam, who hears and believes the news, and takes it to himself; the news might be believed and rejoiced in by every guilty sinner, who is terrified with the thoughts of eternal damnation, nor would any degree of penitency be implied in his faith. For as the famished inhabitants of an island would naturally

be ravished with the news of corn; so every guilty impenitent sinner, frightened with the thoughts of hell, would be ravished with the news of such deliverance. But if the news the Gospel brings does not consider us merely as in a state of great calamity, but as criminals; and condemns us wherein we are most apt to justify ourselves, and even declares us to be worthy of the eternal pains of hell for that for which we thought ourselves not at all to blame; we shall receive the news as an abuse, and reject it with abhorrence, till our uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and we disposed to take all that blame to ourselves, which it supposes us justly chargeable with. But the Gospel brings us news, "That as the divine law, which requires us in our present state to love God with all our hearts and yield a perfect obedience to his will, on pain of eternal wo, is holy, just, and good, a glorious law, worthy to be kept in honour; so the Son of God became incarnate and died upon the cross to do it honour, that God might be just, and yet the justifier of the sinner that believes in Jesus." The plain import of which is, "That, notwithstanding all our self-justifying pleas, the God who reigns above, is an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, and his law perfect in beauty without a blemish; and our disaffection and rebellion wholly inexcusable, and infinitely criminal; and we even too bad to be forgiven, unless through the blood of the Son of God." But to believe this with all the heart, and gladly to receive this news for true, is to give up all our sin-extenuating, self-justifying pleas, to acknowledge ourselves infinitely vile and odious, and to loathe and abhor ourselves in the sight of God, and even to look upon it a worthy and becoming, and godlike deed in the most High, to punish eternally in hell such as we. But thus to view God and his law, and the atonement of Christ, and our own character; and with all our hearts to come into these sentiments as the very truth, and even *gladly to receive this word*, is to be true penitents.

The Jews, through mere disaffection to the divine character and to the divine law, hated Jesus of Nazareth, whose life and doctrines were the very image of his Father, and did honour to his law; and in their hatred, they cried, *crucify him,*

crucify him! and then they led him forth to Mount Calvary, and nailed him to the cross. Their whole conduct was an expression of mortal enmity to the true God and to his Son. When therefore Jesus was risen from the dead, and the Spirit poured out on the day of pentecost, and the guilty Jews, in spite of all their prejudices, by thousands, forced some against their wills, to give into it, that he was in very deed the Messiah, whom they had murdered, terrified by their horrid crimes, and the fears of eternal wrath, pricked at the heart, as though a sword had been run through their vitals, they cry out in anguish, *what shall we do?* To which Peter gives a very remarkable answer. He does not say, "do nothing: be passive." Nor does he say, "believe, O believe your sins are blotted out." But he says, *repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.* As if he had said, "take all that blame to yourselves which belongs to you. Own the whole truth to God. Do not cover, but confess your crimes in his sight, and let your uncircumcised hearts be humbled: and in a sense eternal destruction is your due; look up to the free grace of God through the blood of Christ for pardon; and in token that all your dependance is on his mediation, merits, and atonement, come, be baptized in his name; and your baptism shall be to you an external sign of the remission of sins through his blood." And as many as had their eyes opened by the spirit of God to view things in this light, *gladly received his word,* and were baptized. And these, by the apostles, were esteemed true penitents, and true believers; as they thus hearkened to the divine call, *repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus.*

And it is manifest, from the nature of the case, that he who hath his eyes opened to see the glory of the divine nature, the beauty of the divine law, the infinite evil of sin, the need of an infinite atonement; and so to see his need of Christ; and at the same time, views God as the supreme, all-sufficient good, ready to receive every sinner that returns to him through Christ; it is manifest, I say, that every one who is thus taught of God, will repent and return to God as his sovereign Lord and supreme good, and return through Jesus Christ, who is the way to the Father, and the only way in the view of one

thus divinely enlightened. For in the clearer light the glory of the divine nature and law is seen, in exact proportion will be the sense of the infinite evil of sin, and the need of Christ's infinite atonement and perfect righteousness. And so *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,* will be naturally and inseparably connected. Yea, they will be necessarily implied in each other. For he who repents in the view of the glory of God, the glory of the law, and of the atonement, will in his repentance look only to free grace through Jesus Christ for mercy. And he who looks only to free grace through Jesus Christ for mercy, in a view of the glory of God, law, atonement, will in doing so, take the whole blame of his disaffection to the divine character, as exhibited in the law, and on the cross of Christ, to himself, judge and condemn himself, and in the very act of faith, repent and be converted. When therefore it is said, *believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved,* the same thing is meant, as when it is said, *repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* For the apostolic faith implies repentance in its own nature, and their repentance implies faith in its nature. Sometimes they only mention faith, and sometimes only repentance, and sometimes both together; but the same thing is always intended. For in their views, repentance and faith were mutually implied in each other. Let all the texts of Scripture in the Old and New Testaments, in which we are called to confess our sins, repent and turn to God, with a promise of forgiveness, or to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ that we may be saved, be collected and compared together, and they will all jointly unite to confirm us in these sentiments. The penitent Jew brought a bull or a goat to the altar, and all his hope of pardon was in the shedding of blood; for without shedding of blood, there was no remission. Or if he were at a distance from the place of sacrifice and atonement, yet in all his prayers he looked toward God's holy temple. So Jonah did in the whale's belly, Jonah ii. 4. So Daniel did in Babylon, Dan. vi. 10. And it is evident this was the constant practice of all the pious Jews, from the whole tenour of Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings viii. And for a Jew to look toward

the holy temple, where God dwelt in the most holy place, over the mercy-seat, which covered the ark in which the law was placed in the most honourable situation, while sacrifices were offered without, and incense within, was the same thing as for a penitent Christian to look to the free grace of God through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, who in his life and death, and now by his intercession in heaven, magnifies the law and makes it honourable. For a Jew to confess his sins, repent, and turn unto the Lord, and pray toward the holy temple; was the same as for one in a Christian country to repent, and be converted, and believe in the name of Jesus Christ.

But if any man will still affirm, that we are justified by a faith which is alone, which does not imply repentance and conversion in its nature; it may be boldly asserted, that he contradicts Christ, who sent his Apostles to preach in his name, *repentance and remission of sins*; and his Apostles, who cried, *repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out*. Especially, as Christ doth as expressly declare, that *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*; as he does, *he that believeth not shall be damned*[o].

Thus the point is proved, that repentance is before forgiveness. And thus all objections are answered, and so the way opened for the following remarks:

I. If repentance is before forgiveness; then no man ever was, or ever will be, forgiven, till first he is brought to true repentance. All those therefore are deluded, who while yet impenitent, believe their sins to be forgiven. And the stronger their belief is, the greater is their delusion.—And again,

II. All those definitions of justifying faith, which leave repentance and conversion out of its nature, are definitions of a faith, by which no man ever was, or ever will be justified.—Such, for instance, as make faith a thing, in which the mind is merely passive, such a bare belief of the bare truth, as im-

o This very same doctrine, that repentance is implied in justifying faith, now asserted in opposition to Antinomians, was, near thirty years ago, asserted and defended in opposition to Arminians, by the late learned Mr. Edwards, in his Sermon on Justification by Faith alone, p. 103. 114. A Sermon worthy to be universally read and attended to through the British dominions.

plies no act, exertion or exercise of the heart; which effectually excludes repentance and conversion. And such as make faith to consist in a belief, that there is forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners, as such; which is evidently to believe a lie[p]. And such as make faith to consist merely in a belief, that Christ is mine, and that my sins are forgiven before I repent.——These, and all such like definitions of justifying faith, are of no manner of use, but to comfort those impenitent sinners, against whom the Gospel, as well as the law, reveals the wrath of God.——And again,

III. All those schemes of religion, the import of which is, that we are not wholly and entirely to blame, in not being perfectly conformed to the divine law; and consequently, that it does not belong to us to take the whole blame to ourselves and repent, are diametrically opposite to the Gospel of Christ; which calls upon us to repent and be converted, as being wholly to blame for not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them; yea, infinitely to blame; so that it became the wisdom of God not to forgive us, without an infinite atonement. To say, that this law was too severe, and that our blame is not so great, as this law supposes, is to declare, that it does not belong to us to repent in the sense the Gospel calls us to; and to reject the atonement of Christ, which supposes the whole blame to be

p Mr. Sandeman, speaking of the atonement, says, "All its true friends will readily join in affirming, that Christ came to render impenitent sinners accepted unto everlasting life, by the works which he himself wrought, and thus, by the discovery of preventing goodness, to lead them to repentance." Letters on Theron, p. 382. Edit. 2d. So then, according to him, neither Moses, nor the prophets, nor Christ, nor the apostles, who all taught that repentance is before forgiveness, were true friends to the atonement. Nay, so far from it, that they rendered the atonement, according to Mr. Sandeman, entirely needless. For he affirms, that true penitents may be forgiven without any atonement at all, as was before observed, Sec. v. Mr. Sandeman sums up his whole scheme in faith, hope, and charity. His faith is a belief, that there is forgiveness with God, through the atonement for impenitent sinners, while such: which is a lie. A belief of this lie, is the foundation of his hope, that his sins are forgiven. And this false hope, this hope built on falsehood, is the foundation of his love. The whole of his religion, "consists in love to that which relieves him." Letters to Mr. Pyke, p. 8. that is, "in love to the doctrine of forgiveness," p. 87. that is, in love to this doctrine, that there is forgiveness with God through the atonement for impenitent sinners, while such. That is, in love to a lie.

in us, as an injurious reflection on our character; and even implicitly to declare Jesus Christ to be an impostor. For as Christ lived and died to do honour to the divine law in all its extent, thereby declaring it to be wholly right, and we in fact as much to blame as that supposes, to say we are not, which is the language of every impenitent heart, is to say, that Christ was an impostor. So that impenitence and infidelity are in their own nature inseparably connected, on the one hand; even as repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, are on the other.

IV. All those schemes of religion, which in pretence grant the divine law to be holy, just, and good, a glorious law, and that repentance is before forgiveness; but yet implicitly deny it by asserting, that it is impossible a sinner should be brought to view the law as such, so as cordially to take all the blame to himself and repent, until he knows that his sins are forgiven, are inconsistent with themselves, as well as with the Gospel of Christ; which makes such repentance necessary in order to the forgiveness of sins, and calls upon sinners thus to repent, that their sins may be blotted out, and declares that Christ is exalted to give such repentance to Israel. To repent that we have broken a law we hate, is the repentance of an obstinate rebel; and is in its own nature, a lie; like that in Psal. lxvi. 3. *Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves,* (or as it is in the margin, *lie*) *unto thee.*

V. As the whole tenour of the Gospel of Christ gives the strongest assurance, that no impenitent sinner, remaining such, shall ever be forgiven; so the whole tenour of all false Gospels, is to persuade impenitent sinners, while such, to believe that their sins are forgiven. Some schemes do this by preaching up a counterfeit repentance, and promising forgiveness to that; meanwhile justifying sinners, in their continuing destitute of that repentance to which the Gospel calls them, as the *Socinian, Arminian, Neonomian,* &c[q]. and other schemes

[q] Of the counterfeit sorts of repentance which are preached up, these two are the chief; 1st. Some say, that the divine law, which originally required us to love God with all our hearts, and yield a perfect obedience to his will, is abated: and therefore we are not to blame in not being perfectly conformed to it: and

expressly teach, that we are forgiven before repentance; which is the case with various sorts of *Antinomian* schemes. But all false schemes, how much soever they differ among themselves, agree in promising eternal life to those who are destitute of true repentance.

VI. If according to God's established method of dispensing pardon to his criminal guilty creatures, repentance is before forgiveness, we may hence see the harmony between the impetration and application of redemption; both exactly agree in their nature and tendency to honour God, to magnify his law, to establish his authority, to discountenance and embitter sin, to humble the sinner, to glorify grace, and to exalt Christ.

The cross of Christ, in the sight of the whole intellectual system, declared, that God was wholly right, and that we

therefore it does not belong to us to repent of this non-conformity. And so the sinner is justified in being without that very repentance, to which the Gospel calls him. And now to repent wherein they fall short of a conformity to their abated law, is substituted in the room of true repentance. And they being ignorant of the law of perfection, and the infinite evil of sin, are prepared to make a righteousness of their false repentance; and know no need of Christ only to purchase this abatement of the law, and to make up for their defects of obedience to it, thus abated. 2d. Others, who say the divine law is in full force, unaltered, unabated; yet exempt themselves from blame, by saying, "we have no more power to love God perfectly, than the man with the withered hand had to stretch out his hand." And when they come to explain themselves, they make the inability of a sinner to be as innocent a kind of a thing, as was the man with the withered hand. But who sees not, that the man with a withered hand was not at all to blame; for he could not help his hand being withered, let his heart be ever so well inclined to it. It would perfectly have suited his heart to have had that hand well. It was owing to no fault in him that it remained withered. He might be sorry for it as a calamity, but could not blame himself for it as a crime. And even after Christ had restored it whole as the other, although he might be thankful for it as a benefit done to him, yet he could not blame himself, neither could he repent, that his withered hand had not been well sooner. And thus, while this is supposed to be an exact representation of the true nature of our inability, perfectly to conform to the divine law in heart and life, true repentance is for ever secluded. No blame belongs to us in this case, nor can we on this scheme take any blame to ourselves, before, at, or after our supposed conversion; for not being *perfect as our Father which is in heaven*, is perfect. And thus the sinner is justified in his impenitency. And in exact proportion as the sinner is justified, God and his law stand condemned. For there is blame somewhere; and if not in us, it must be in him who blames us, even in him who says, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things.*

were wholly wrong, and as much to blame as the divine law supposed And so declared, that God is an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being; and that his law, which requires us to love him with all our hearts on pain of eternal death, is holy, just, and good; and that our disaffection to the divine character, and rebellion against him, is inexcusable, and even infinitely criminal. In consequence of which, the gift of Christ to die in our room, that God might be just, and yet the justifier of the believer, appears to be an act of grace, infinitely great, and absolutely free. And because Christ humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, in this great work; therefore is he exalted to sit even at his Father's right hand, honoured with all the honours of heaven; and repentance and remission of sins are granted in his name to apostate, God-hating, guilty rebels. And thus God is honoured, Christ exalted, grace glorified, and sin condemned, in the work of our redemption.

In exact harmony with which, the guilty criminal is, by the almighty power of divine grace, brought to view things in this light, and to be affected accordingly. To look upon God as an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, upon the divine law as holy, just, and good, a glorious law; upon his own disaffection and rebellion, as entirely inexcusable and infinitely criminal; upon the gift of Christ, as an act of grace infinitely great and absolutely free; and in these views, and with an answerable frame of heart, to look only to free grace through Jesus Christ, now at his Father's right hand, for pardon, as of mere free mercy, to a wretch so infinitely odious and ill-deserving, as that it had been an act worthy of God to have cast him into eternal burnings. And thus all is exactly suited to exalt God, to honour the law, to embitter sin, to glorify grace, and render Christ exceeding precious in the sinner's heart.—And so,

The same views, spirit, and temper, which were in Christ Jesus to perfection, when he wrought out our redemption on the cross, are in measure communicated to a dead sinner, when he is quickened and raised up to a new and divine life; and so he is *made partaker of the divine nature*, and becomes

a living *branch in the true vine*, a living *member of Christ's body. For of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace.* For he and all the members of his body are one, not only one relatively, but one in heart, one in spirit, the same spirit which dwells in Christ being communicated to them. *For ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the spirit of Christ dwells in you.* In regeneration and conversion, these views and affections begin to take place, and from year to year, *as with open face, they behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord*; so they are more and more *changed into the same image from glory to glory*, till all come to be *one with him, as he and his Father are one.*

But on the contrary, if, as some plead, pardon is granted to the impenitent sinner, while such, a belief of which is the foundation of his love and of all his religion; then in the application of redemption, God and his law are dishonoured, the import of Christ's death is denied, sin is justified, the sinner's self-justifying spirit is gratified, and the grace of the Gospel kept out of view. For this is the native language of such a sinner's heart, "there is no loveliness conceivable in the divine nature, but what results from his love to me, and it is impossible I should love God from any other motive, nor is it my duty, nor is the Gospel designed to bring me to it, nor am I to blame that I do not, nor do I need the atonement of Christ in the case, or pardon for not loving God for the loveliness of his own nature. For there is no loveliness in his nature, but as he loves me, and designs to save me." Thus the absolutely perfect, the infinitely glorious and amiable Being, who is by nature God, in himself, let me be saved or damned, infinitely worthy of supreme love, and honour, and universal obedience, according to the united import of the divine law, and of the cross of Christ, is at once stripped of all the original, independent, eternal, immutable glories of his Godhead, the divine law is virtually pronounced tyrannical, the import of Christ's death impiously denied, his atonement pronounced needless, and himself virtually declared to be an impostor, our being dead in sin justified, our disaffection to the divine character declared to be no crime, or reconciliation to be no duty, no pardon, no atonement, no

sanctifier needed in the case. "No, for we are right, God and his law are wrong; if God will repent and make restitution; if God will deliver us from the curse of the law, and give us heaven, we will forgive him, feel no more heart-risings toward him, but love him if he will thus love us. Otherwise, it is impossible we should love him, impossible but that we should hate him and his law. For there is no loveliness conceivable in his nature, unless he will love and save me." Thus the impenitent, proud, haughty wretch, ungods the Deity, condemns his law, blasphemes the cross of Christ, justifies himself, denies his sin, his need of atonement, of regeneration, of repentance, of pardon, and is filled with love and joy in a firm belief that God Almighty looks upon things as he does. And this impious, blasphemous love and joy, he calls by the sacred name of Christian piety.

SECTION IX.

The nature and effects, the cause and cure, of a self-righteous spirit.

THE nature and effects, the cause and cure of a self-righteous spirit, might have been collected from the principles laid down and proved in the other sections of this Essay, by the judicious reader; but for the sake of weaker capacities, it may not be amiss, if these things are briefly stated. And the rather, as it is of great importance this subject be well understood.——In general, then,

A self-righteous spirit consists in a disposition to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. And so, it is pride. And it stands in opposition to humility, which is to *think soberly of ourselves, and as we ought to think,* as St. Paul defines it. Rom. xii. 3. And a self-righteous spirit arises from blindness to the divine glory, and ignorance of our true character and state, as they appear in the sight of God, and as they really are, compared with his holy law. The spiritual knowledge of God and his law, and a view of

ourselves in contrast with God and his law thus known, is the cure of a self-righteous spirit. When the divine character, as exhibited in his law, begins to appear in its infinite glory, our character will begin to appear in its infinite odiousness. And this begets a disposition to think soberly of ourselves, and as we ought to think. And so we, through the law, become dead to the law, that we may live to God.——But to be more particular,

I. A self-righteous spirit consists in a disposition to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. How we ought to think of ourselves hath been already stated, Sect. III. p. 371, 372. When a man thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think on the account of his fine clothes, he is called by the odious name of fop. But when in the exercise of the same temper, he thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think, upon religious accounts, he is called by the more odious name of a self-righteous man. Luke xviii. 9. 14. The same spirit of pride, which leads one to be proud in a view of his fine clothes, inclines another to be proud in a view of his large estate, or honourable parentage, or good bodily features, or superior genius, or great acquired mental accomplishments. And it is the same spirit which leads all mankind in general to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think in religious respects. For a self-righteous spirit is common to mankind in general, although in different men it operates differently; and in some more than in others. It reigns in all unregenerate men: and it is mortified in saints no further than they are sanctified, and will not be entirely eradicated out of their hearts until they become perfectly holy. It operates differently in different men.

In the profane, it operates to keep them secure, to fortify them against the fears of death and hell, and guard them against the terrors of the divine law; that they may take their full swing in sinful pleasures unmolested. For thus it inclines them to think, "I can break off my sins when I please. And whenever I break off, God will be obliged to forgive me." Herein he thinks more highly of himself than he ought to think, in two respects. *First*, he thinks his heart to be much better than it is, even that he can find in his heart

to give up all sin and turn to God. But if he would make a thorough trial, he would find it to be a mistake. He would find that sin has full power of his soul. That he loves it so entirely, that it is not in his heart to be inclined to forsake it. To forsake sin, in general, I mean; for he may be inclined to change one lust for another, turn out a black devil and take in a white one, leave profaneness, and become a civil, sober, self-righteous hypocrite. But to turn from all sin in general, and to turn unto the Lord, is not in his heart. *For the carnal mind is enmity against God; is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.* And, *secondly*, he thinks too highly of himself in another respect, viz. that there will be so much virtue in his repentance and reformation, as to atone for all his past wickedness, and entitle him to the favour of God. Whereas, according to the divine estimation, there is so much blame and ill-desert in one wilful transgression, as to make an eternal forfeiture of his soul, and plunge him into a hopeless, remediless state, according to a rule of strict justice. So that if he had no more interest in Adam's sin than in Noah's; yet, after one transgression, he is a lost creature, liable to die and go to hell in a moment; and God absolutely unobliged, if he lives, to grant him any assistance of his Spirit, or ever to regard any of his prayers. For if one transgression exposes a man to the curse of the law, according to Gal. iii. 10. then the transgressor may be justly sent to hell immediately. And therefore God is unobliged to show him any favour of any kind. And it is entirely owing to pride and self-conceit, that sinners are inclined to view things in another light. They think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. And this, which is natural to profane sinners, has a great influence to keep them secure in sin.

In awakened sinners it operates to incline them, by their reformations, prayers, tears, &c. to go about to establish their own righteousness. For being so terrified with the thoughts of eternal destruction, that they can no longer go on quietly in their sinful pleasures, they now go about to pacify the Deity by their amendment and fervent prayers. And thus they think; "If I repent and reform, if I humble myself before God, and pray, and do as well as I can, he is obliged to show

me mercy: for it would be hard and unjust in God to require more of his poor creatures than they can do, and then damn them for not doing." And perhaps thousands and ten thousands build their hopes for heaven on this foundation, and live and die upon it. Not considering, that *if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.* Not once reflecting, that if their best doings ought in reason to recommend them to the divine favour, there was no occasion for the incarnation and death of the Son of God. And that therefore, if they are right, the whole Gospel is overthrown. Their pride absolutely blinds their eyes, that they cannot see; and stops their ears, that they cannot hear; and hardens their hearts, that they cannot understand. Or, if some men, of more penetration, perceive that this way of thinking does in fact overthrow Christianity, they will sooner give up the whole of divine revelation, than give up their pride. And from this source it is, that Great-Britain is so filled with infidels. And from this source it is, that infidelity begins to creep into New England, which, if divine grace prevents not, may in half a century make great progress. For as the Pharisees would sooner believe, that Jesus *cast out devils by Beelzebub,* than that they were *serpents and a generation of vipers,* worthy of *the damnation of hell;* even so it is here. But meanwhile,

In Antinomian converts, to extricate themselves out of these embarrassments, a self-righteous spirit prompts and emboldens them, to take a short and easy method, to think well of God and of themselves both at once, and so their pride and religion become perfectly harmonious; in the belief of these two maxims, (1st.) *God loves me, impenitent as I am.* (2d.) *To believe that God thus loves me, and to love him merely in this belief, is the sum of religion.* For in the belief of these two articles, the divine law, which stands prepared to slay the self-righteous sinner, is set aside, and turned out of doors; the curse, by the first; the command, by the second; and so the divine law being cashiered by this belief, the self-righteous sinner stands completely self-justified. He believes, or rather imagines himself into the love of God, and out of the reach of the law; and so into a good opinion of the Deity, and of him-

self, both at once. Or rather through that enmity to God's real character, with which his self-righteous spirit inspired him; emboldened by the same self-righteous spirit, he forms a deity in his own fancy, all made up of love to him, which suits his heart; and being suited with the deity he has made, is pleased with himself more than ever. And so he thinks himself a believer, a saint, a disciple of Christ, and that he shall be rewarded in heaven for all the reproach he brings upon himself; not knowing that enmity to God and his law, and to the cross of Christ, lie at the bottom, and are the sources of all his religion. And thus, and in this way, he is confirmed and self-justified in thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think. And thus we see how a self-righteous spirit operates differently in different persons. These three sorts are mentioned only as a specimen; for instead of three, there may perhaps be three hundred different ways in which this same spirit works.

II. A self-righteous, is a sin-extenuating, self-justifying, and in consequence a law-hating, God-condemning disposition; and so stands in direct opposition to *repentance towards God, faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*. Just in exact proportion as a man is inclined to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, is he inclined to make sin-extenuating, self-justifying pleas. And every word he says in his own justification, is to the condemnation of God and of his law. For if in fact we are not so bad, nor so much to blame, as the divine law supposes, he who made the law will stand condemned. Take Gal. iii. 10. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*, which are the words with which St. Paul militated against a self-righteous spirit in his day, and show what the divine law requires in heart and life, and show what is implied in the curse, and from the eternal punishment threatened, infer the infinite evil of sin, and by consequence our infinite obligations to love God with all our hearts, and yield a perfect obedience to his will; and show that God is absolutely unobliged, according to law, that perfect rule of right, either to assist the sinner, or to pardon his defects; and urge this law home upon a self-righteous heart, as the law of the

great God, the law which was honoured on the cross of Christ, and which will be put in execution at the day of judgment on every Christless sinner, angels and saints shouting *hallelujah* all around the judge; and as the anvil bounds back the hammer, so will such a heart resist the truth. And while he extenuates his sin and justifies himself, he will blame the law, and condemn the law-giver.—— For,

Says the *profane*, "To suppose that my delaying repentance one day longer, is so great a crime, as justly to expose me to the eternal pains of hell without hope, cannot be true. Nor will I ever believe God is so unjust as to put his frail creatures under such a law."——And,

Says the *awakened*—"I have reformed and humbled myself before God, and prayed, and done what I can. And to believe now, after all, that God is still absolutely unobliged to show me mercy; that he requires perfect love and perfect obedience on pain of eternal damnation; is more than I can bear. It cannot be justified. The very thoughts of it breed hatred and heart-risings in spite of my heart."——And,

Says the Antinomian convert, "I always found by experience, that it was impossible to love God, before I believed his love to me. And by experience I still find, that it is impossible to love God in any other view. All therefore that God really requires, is, that we believe his love to us, and in that belief, love him again." And thus all three stand discharged from that duty which the divine law requires, self-justified; God and his law implicitly condemned.

The divine law supposeth, that God is an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being; and on this ground it requires mankind, each and every one, to love him with all their hearts, on pain of eternal death. This it requires even of the Gentiles, who never heard of the grace of the Gospel, and consequently of all mankind, antecedent to that consideration. And in the sight of God all were *without excuse, every mouth stopped*, and in this view of the case, he gave his Son to die upon the cross, to declare this law to be holy, just, and good. But in this view, the divine law is universally hated by every self-righteous heart, and a non-conformity thereto is universally justified, from the most profane

to the most devout. "I cannot," cries one. "It is impossible," cries another. "The very thought of such a law breeds hatred and heart-risings, in spite of my heart," cries each and every one [r].

Now that belief, which gives comfort to a self-righteous heart, thus at enmity against the divine law, by whatever humble name it is called, does in fact, feed and confirm a self-righteous spirit: and for that reason, will be tenaciously maintained, although without any evidence from Scripture,

r Mr. Cudworth has gone further, and taken a very extraordinary step indeed, to justify the self-righteous sinner, in not loving that character of God, which is exhibited in the divine law, in honour to which an incarnate God died on the cross. He not only declares, and endeavours to prove, that it is "utterly impossible" to love it: but also that to love it, is in its own nature a wicked thing, "contrary to the law of God." p. 224. And if "contrary to the law of God," it is contrary to the nature of God. God himself then does not love that character. That is, God the Father does not love himself. No wonder then he thinks, that to love this character is "beyond what Adam did in Paradise, beyond the Scripture saints, the apostles, and even Jesus Christ himself." For if it is "contrary to the law of God," and so a wicked thing, it must be contrary to the nature of God, and of every holy Being in the universe. And thus the self-righteous sinner stands completely justified, in not loving God's true and real character. Yea, has the comfort to think it would be a sin to love it: a thing "contrary to the law of God."

But "contrary to the law of God," and wicked as it is, no sooner does he see Theron brought through the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, in a view of the amiableness of this character, to take all the blame of his disaffection to the Deity himself, and repent and return to God through Jesus Christ, all his hope of acceptance arising simply from mere free grace through the great atonement, but he changes his tone; and for the sake of condemning Theron, expressly contradicts himself.—For now, all at once, that very thing which he had been just trying to prove to be "contrary to the law of God," is affirmed to be of so holy and divine a nature, as to have virtue and merit enough in it to atone for all our past sins, and recommend us to the favour of God, and entitle us to eternal life, without any need of Christ or his atonement. Such converts as I make my Theron to be, he affirms, "have no occasion for the sovereign mercy of God in Jesus Christ. They are entitled to life in their own name, on the foundation of their own love, wherever they can be found." p. 227, 228. And this he sets himself to prove, p. 261, 262. from the words of the Prophet Ezekiel, which has been already answered. So that according to Mr. Cudworth, that which is in its own nature sinful, "contrary to the law of God," is more meritorious than all the virtue of the heavenly hosts, which would not be sufficient to atone for one sin. Yea, its virtue is as effectual to save, as the blood and righteousness of the Son of God. If Mr. Cudworth can believe all this, what cannot he believe? And can such a man be reasoned with?

sense, or reason. So one believes, that if he will do as well as he can, God has promised to save him: and this gives him ease. And another believes, that God has promised absolutely to save him without any condition at all: and this gives him comfort more abundantly. And while each remains strong in his belief, by which the divine law is set aside and removed out of sight, each enjoys himself full well. But if light should break in, and the divine law come into view, and their true character and state appear, dead in sin and under the curse, both would return to their "hatred and heart-risings" again, as much as ever. For the sin-extenuating, self-justifying temper, remaining unmortified, God and his law will be, of course, hated and condemned, whenever they come into view. The faith of both is of use only to keep God and his law out of sight and out of mind, and thus it comforts them. Let God and his law come into view, and their faith is destroyed, and their comforts are gone, and their heart-risings come again. And therefore both are to the last degree tenacious of their different schemes. A self-righteous spirit lies at the bottom of all their zeal, as their schemes are adapted to give ease and comfort to self-righteous hearts, and guard and defend them from the terrors of the divine law, prevent the blasphemous workings of their own minds, which beget horror and awaken the fears of future wrath.

III. A sin-extenuating, self-justifying, self-righteous frame of heart, is in direct opposition to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For had our disaffection to the divine character not been as criminal as the curse of the law supposed, there had been no reason the Son of God should have been made a curse in our stead. Had there been any plea to extenuate our fault, or in the least to have justified us in our not loving God with all our hearts, the law had not been strictly right. And God's being so severe against sin, had not been a beauty but a blemish in his character. And if there had been a blemish in the divine character, to love him with all our hearts, had been strictly and properly impossible. The fault would have been not in us, but in God. And so no need of Christ to die, to declare God to be wholly right. Rather, as on this hypothesis, God was wrong, he ought to have retracted, to have re-

pealed his law, and granted us relief; he ought in justice to have done it, and a Mediator was altogether needless in the case. And thus the sinner is justified, and God condemned, and the whole Gospel overthrown. And this is the native tendency of a self-righteous spirit. A self-righteous spirit is therefore in direct opposition to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And accordingly,

A self-righteous spirit was the source of the hatred and heart-risings of the Pharisees against the character of Jesus Christ. They could not bear to think themselves so bad as his doctrines imported; and therefore they became soon disaffected toward his person. John iii. 19, 20, 21. And when he plainly told them, what they were in the sight of God, and what they deserved at his hands, in the 23d Chap. of Mat. they immediately conspired to put him to death. The 23d of Matth. contains our Saviour's last speech to the Pharisees, who, three days after, got him fast nailed to the crosss. *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell,* were words the Pharisees never could forgive. The character these words gave the Pharisees was no worse, was but just equal to the import of the divine law, the law God gave to Moses, the very law which the Pharisees pretended to believe and love, but which they really hated. Our Saviour, therefore, merited their resentment by these words, no more than God the Father did by his law.—And, indeed, in the height of all their religion and devotion, they hated God the Father as much as they did Jesus, his well-beloved Son. And their hatred to the true God had led them to frame a false image of God in their own fancy, to suit their own hearts. This false image they loved, and were zealous for his cause. And this love and zeal, infinitely odious to God as it was, they made a righteousness of and gloried in. This proud, self-righteous spirit, prepared them to hate and murder the Son of God, the express image of his Father. And in their conduct, as in a glass, the nature and tendency of a self-righteous spirit may be clearly seen.

IV. A sin-extenuating, self-justifying, self-righteous spirit, is cordially beloved, approved of, and justified; and so reigns in the heart of every unregenerate man; how great soever

the zeal of some may seem to be against it. For he who condemns it in one shape, may heartily like it in another. And every unregenerate man, of whatever profession, Arminian, Antinomian, or Calvinist, is at enmity against God and his law; and therefore is disposed to justify himself, and lay the blame upon his Maker. Being better instructed, many may keep their thoughts to themselves, as being rationally convinced they are wrong, how naturally soever they flow from their hearts, and indicate the true temper of their souls; but thousands will boldly speak out their minds, and in their ignorance attempt to justify themselves before their Maker.

"It is impossible," cries one, "that I should love God before I know my sins are pardoned: for there is no loveliness in his nature in any other view." And if there is no loveliness in his nature, but on this account; then the law which, without any respect to this, requires us to love God with all the heart, is wrong. And so the man is not to blame, but stands justified, in his non-conformity to this perfect rule of right.

"But the divine law requires sinless perfection," says another, "and that on the penalty of eternal damnation: but this is more than any son of Adam can do." And what consequence would he draw from these words, to which he has no determinate ideas, as such men will admit of no distinction between want of heart, and want of power. What consequence, I say? Why, in his esteem, no son of Adam is to be blamed, for not being perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect. And so an apostate world all stand justified at once, in their *not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them.* And therefore the HOLY ONE of Israel must be condemned, for denouncing the curse in this case. And the Son of God must be supposed to have died a sacrifice to tyranny. All which is no better than downright blasphemy, pregnant with infidelity. But a self-righteous heart will maintain its ground, and stand the shock, although to the subversion of all religion, natural and revealed.

Therefore I say, a self-righteous, self-justifying disposition, not only operates, but reigns in every unregenerate heart.

It is loved, it is approved, it is justified, it has full possession of the heart. Even so full possession, as to to be proof against all the miracles which support the truth of divine revelation. And therefore let God declare in his law, that any defect of perfect obedience merits eternal wo; and let the goodness of this law be asserted and sealed by the blood of an incarnate God, it is all to no purpose. A self-justifying heart will stand its ground, and vindicate itself, in opposition to all.

Our blessed Saviour, the express image of his Father's person, viewed the character of the Pharisees in the same light his Father's law did, and in his heart he verily thought "all heaven ought for ever to love and adore the infinitely glorious Majesty, although they received their just desert, and perished for ever." *Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?* And had they viewed themselves in the same light, and had an answerable frame of heart, they had not been disgusted, but rather pleased with his character. "Truth, Lord, we are serpents, we are a generation of vipers, an infinitely odious and hateful race, worthy of the damnation of hell. Nor would it be a blemish, but a beauty in the divine conduct, to send us thither." This would have been to have thought soberly of themselves, and as they ought to have thought[s]. But just the reverse was the temper of their hearts. "You think damnation good enough for us. And we think crucifixion good enough for you. *Away with*

s This would have been to have thought soberly of themselves, and as they ought to have thought. No, says Mr. Cudworth, this would have been "the summit" of self-righteousness, p. 224. That is, if the Pharisees had viewed their own character in that odious point of light in which Christ did, it had been the highest degree of pride. Why then were not the Pharisees pleased with that odious character Christ gave them? Why was not their pride gratified by these words, *ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?* Does Mr. Cudworth really believe, that God the Father and God the Son viewed the character of the Pharisees in a point of light, in which, if the Pharisees had viewed themselves, it must have cherished and fed a self-righteous spirit? To believe this, is worse than infidelity. And yet this is implied in his charging my Theron with self-righteousness, merely for viewing his character in the very light in which it stood in the eyes of God, and of his Son, in which view he thought in his heart, that all heaven ought for ever to "love and adore the infinitely glorious Majesty, although he received his just desert and perished for ever." And so God the Father thought, and so thought Jesus Christ his Son.

him, away with him! crucify him, crucify him!" And if these men *had no cloak for their sin* in our Saviour's eyes, 1700 years ago, we may be assured that all our self-justifying pleas will be esteemed of no weight in his sight, when he comes to judge the world according to his Father's law, in all its rigour. So far, so very far from it, that when he pronounces the final sentence, angels and saints will shout forth their hallelujahs all around him.

These is not a self-justifying sinner on earth, who has a better plea to make in his own behalf than many a Pharisee had. Can you say, "I am strict in external duties"—"I more," might the pharisee say—"All these things have I kept from my youth up. Yea, as touching the righteousness of the law, I am blameless. For, lo! these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment."—"Yes, but I practise many difficult and self-denying duties," says the sinner; "I more," says the Pharisee; "I fast twice in the week, and give tythes of all that I possess." "But I am hearty and zealous in religion," says the sinner; "I more," says the Pharisee; "for with great expense and fatigue I compass sea and land to make proselytes." "But I believe that God loves me, and that I shall assuredly have eternal life; and in this belief, I love God," says the sinner; "I more," says the Pharisee; "for we know we not only have Abraham to our Father, but God is our Father. And I can thank God I am not as other men, in his very presence, for he knows how good and how upright I am." "Yes, but the Pharisees hated Jesus Christ," says the sinner. True, but no more than you hate that character of God which is exhibited in that law, to do honour to which, the Son of God laid down his life. They felt toward the character of Jesus Christ, just as every self-righteous sinner feels toward the character of God the Father exhibited in his law. "Yes, but I believe the Gospel, and they rejected it." You cordially believe the Gospel in no other sort than they believed the writings of Moses, viz. understood in such a manner as to justify them, even as they justified themselves. In every other sense, whatever orthodox profession the self-righteous sinner may make with his mouth, yet in the temper of his heart, he rejects the

Gospel as much as they did. For no man believes that Jesus is the Christ, with all his heart, but he who is born of God. 1 John v. 1. Indeed you may give the Gospel a new meaning of your own, just as they did the writings of Moses, and this new meaning you may love and believe cordially, even as they believed their pharisaical scheme. But the very truth you hate and oppose in the temper of your heart, even as they hated and opposed Christ in an open and public manner. "But it is impossible this should be my character, for then I am no better than an enemy to the God of heaven," says the sinner. True, exactly true.—This is your very character in the sight of heaven. As it is written, Rom. viii. 7. *The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.* And just so our blessed Saviour, the meek and lowly Jesus, told the Pharisees, *ye serpents, ye generation of vipers.* Nor had they any reason to take this plain dealing ill at his hands.

V. There is nothing short of the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, that can effectually take down the pride of a self-righteous heart, and beget a disposition to justify God, and take blame to ourselves, answerable to the import of the divine law.

Scriptural and rational arguments cannot do it. Rather as the Leviathan in the book of Job, *esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood;* so all Scriptural and rational arguments are before a self-righteous heart.

Miracles are also insufficient. For when the Pharisees could evade the force of them no other way, they would even in contradiction to common sense, declare, *he casteth out devils by Beelzebub.* Just as if *satan might be divided against himself.*

Nay, Scripture, and reason, and miracles, all united together, are not able to take down the pride of a self-righteous heart. St. Paul tried them all, and he did his best, and a little before his death, in an Epistle to his son Timothy, he fairly owns himself beat. 2 Tim. iii. 13. *Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.* He could make them see that they were inconsistent with themselves, and even make it appear to others that they were self-con-

demned; but still they would obstinately maintain their self-righteous principles, although they were excommunicated for it. Tit. iii. 10, 11. And these men were our ensamples, and these things were *written for our instruction.*

For an impenitent sinner to "believe that God loves him, and that his sins are forgiven," instead of taking down, naturally feeds the pride of a self-righteous heart. Witness the Pharisees of old.

To say, "that we are to be perfectly passive, to do nothing, to feel no motion in our hearts; but to be justified without any act, exercise, or exertion in the human mind," does not indeed agree with Scripture language, which calls upon us to *repent and be converted, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that our sins may be blotted out, and we be saved;* however, it is not so disagreeable to the pride of an indolent, sluggish heart, dead in sin, but that it may pass. For if men can but get a hope they shall be saved, without being brought down to own that God's character is as glorious, and theirs as odious, as the divine law supposes, and so without being necessitated to look to free grace through Jesus Christ, in that precise point of light, in which it is exhibited to view in the Gospel, the life of Agag is saved; a proud, impenitent, self-justifying, self-righteous spirit, is unsubdued; and the native enmity of the heart against the divine character, keeps its ground. And a carnal heart, under terror, can, in a strait, bear with any scheme, in which these points may be saved. But to exalt God so high, and come down so low, as in the least degree to answer to the import of the divine law, and to the import of the cross of Christ, is so diametrically opposite to the temper of a carnal heart, which is at enmity against God, that nothing short of the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit can effect it.

No conviction, from the spirit of God, the mind of a natural man, remaining such, is capable of, is sufficient to strike death to the root of a proud, self-righteous, self-justifying disposition. Great convictions of sin and guilt, a natural man is capable of. Yea, it is possible the conscience of a natural man may be so awakened, as that he may know, may be quite certain, that there is not the least jot of goodness in his

heart; yea, that he is dead, altogether dead in sin; and so has nothing in the world to make a righteousness of: whereby he may be driven to despair, totally to despair of mercy, from this quarter; yea, and his mouth be so stopped, as that he has not one word to say for himself: yet all this, how much soever it may knock down and stun a self-righteous spirit, does not in the least cure the mind of a self-righteous disposition. And nothing is wanting but materials to work upon, and the disposition will rise again, and live and reign as high as ever. Thus it is in some sinners, who have had great legal convictions, upon their receiving false comfort, and getting false religious affections, they have been more proud after their supposed conversion than ever they were before; and more under the government of a self-righteous, self-justifying spirit. Proud when full of comfort; and when their good feelings are all gone, virtually laying all the blame to God, who they say, is withdrawn from them, and they can do nothing of themselves; not once imagining that they are really criminal, infinitely criminal in the sight of God, *for not loving the Lord their God with all their hearts*, according to the first and great command of God's holy law. And hence it is always difficult, to convince a deluded sinner in proportion as his false comforts and joys have been great. Although, in strict truth, there is no more grace in the heart of the devoutest Pharisee on earth, than in the vilest pirate that ever sailed the seas. For it is true of every unregenerate man, that he is *at enmity against God*. Rom. viii. 7.

By the law is the knowledge of sin; and by the law a natural man may see that he is a sinner in so complete a sense, as that he has nothing to make a righteousness of: and yet the self-righteous disposition may remain wholly unmortified. Thus in this sense, no doubt, satan now knows, that he is a sinner: and in this sense, it is certain, satan and all wicked beings will know at the day of judgment, that they are sinners. However, the pride of satan's heart is not mortified now, nor will the pride of satan, or any other wicked being, be slain by the convictions they will receive at the day of judgment.

Nothing can effectually take down the heart, short of that light in which the divine law and our own character is seen, through the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit. If before regeneration *the commandment come, sin revive, and I die*, in a sort; yet all this is sore against the bias of the heart: but it is in regeneration, that *I through the law am* cordially *dead to the law, that I may live to God.*——For,

A disposition to justify ourselves in not loving God with all our hearts, will itself actually die and cease to be, and the contrary disposition take place, only in proportion as God appears to our souls worthy of our supreme love. It is this, and nothing short of this, which will incline us, from the heart, of our own accord, to take all the blame of our disaffection to the divine character home to ourselves. And so while the divine law is viewed in the light of the divine glory, it will appear as it never did before, holy, just, and good, a glorious law; and it will come to pass, as it is written, *I through the law am dead to the law, that I may live to God.*

The damned will at the day of judgment have such a knowledge of God and of themselves, as will convince their consciences that the law is just. Rom. ii. 5. Jude 15. Sore against their wills, they will be forced to own, that God ought to have been loved and obeyed; and that they deserve damnation for their disaffection and rebellion. But, being blind to the holy beauty of the divine nature, they will feel no inclination, no free, genuine, cordial disposition to take the blame of their disaffection and rebellion home to themselves. Their proud, self-justifying temper, will remain unmortified, while they are conscience-convinced that they are absolutely without excuse. They would be heartily glad to excuse themselves and lay the blame upon God, if they could. Their old disposition that way will be wholly alive: but their mouths will be stopped. And therefore they will blaspheme God, and be self-condemned, both at once. An amazing, dreadful state.

But in regeneration, the sinner is brought to such a view of God, as an absolutely perfect, infinitely glorious and amiable Being; and to such a view of the divine law, as holy, just, and good, a glorious law; as even begins to kill a self-

righteous, self-justifying disposition in the bottom of the heart. And from the inmost soul the man begins to see, think, and feel, that God is wholly right, and that he himself is wholly wrong; and so from the heart to give up every sin-extenuating, self-justifying plea, and cordially to take the whole blame to himself, and frankly to own the honest truth—*I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. God be merciful unto me, a sinner.*

And now, and not till now, will he begin to see that he needs that kind of pardon which the Gospel offers. A pardon which supposes, that our disaffection to the Deity is entirely inexcusable, yea, infinitely criminal; so very criminal, that the blood of an incarnate God was necessary to make atonement for it, that, consistent with the honour of the divine government, it might be forgiven.

And now, and not till now, will he begin to see the atonement of Christ. For till now he will not begin to see his disaffection to the deity so very criminal, as to render such an atonement needful, in order to his being pardoned, consistent with the divine honour.

And as his sense of God, as an absolutely perfect, infinitely glorious and amiable Being, increaseth; and his sense of the divine law as holy, just, and good, a glorious law, honoured on the cross by the blood of an incarnate God; and his sense of the inexcusableness and infinite evil of not loving God with all his heart; as a sense of these increases, his proud, self-righteous, self-justifying disposition, will die; and his need of Christ and free grace, appear in a clearer and clearer light.——No man, so sensible of his need of Christ and free grace, as the Apostle Paul, who beyond doubt was the holiest of all mere men, that ever lived—*I through the law am dead to the law, that I may live to God. I am crucified with Christ.*

SECTION X.

The nature and consequences of Spiritual blindness: and how the god of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not.

WHEN it is said, that *satan provoked* or stirred up *David to number Israel,* (1 Chron. xxi. 1.) it is not to be imagined, that the corruptions of his own heart did not move him to that deed. This was no doubt the true state of the case, (ver. 17.) and satan only took advantage of those corruptions to set him on. So when it is said, that *the God of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them;* no doubt the corruptions of the human heart lie at the bottom of all that criminal blindness, which satan endeavours to increase and strengthen by all ways in his power.

The question therefore comes to this, "what is there in the human heart, which renders men blind to the glory of the Gospel?" Or in other words, "what is there in the heart of a fallen creature, which renders him blind to the beauty and glory of the divine nature, shining with so much brightness, in the Gospel-way of salvation through the blood of Christ?" For if man were not a fallen, depraved, vicious creature, he could not be blind to such beauty; a beauty which affects the hearts and engages the attention of all the angelical hosts, who have not that special concern in the affair which we have. They desire, earnestly desire, to look into these things. 1 Pet. i. 12. And discern in them the manifold wisdom of God. Eph. iii. 10.

1. Spiritual blindness consists primarily in the want of spiritual sight; or in not being sensible of the loveliness, beauty, and glory of divine things, as they are in themselves. There is a natural beauty and glory in the natural world, in the sun, moon, and stars, &c. which men see who are not naturally blind: so there is a holy, heavenly, divine beauty, and glory in divine things, in God and Christ, in the law and

Gospel, &c. which men see, who are not spiritually blind. The word *blindness*, which is applied to the mind, is borrowed from one of our external senses; and in its original signification, means a privation of sight. So it was with the man born blind. He was destitute of the sight of his eyes from his birth. But this outward blindness, although in several respects a great resemblance of inward spiritual blindness; as a blind man has no more idea of natural beauty, than one spiritually blind has of divine beauty; yet there is this great essential difference between the blindness of the eyes, and the spiritual blindness of the mind, viz. One is the nature of a calamity simply, the other is not only a calamity, but is also of a vicious nature, in itself properly a crime; as it is seated chiefly in the heart, and consists in being stupid to that divine beauty and loveliness, with which the mind ought to be deeply affected. To have no relish for holy beauty, to have no heart to look upon holiness itself as a lovely thing, is equivalent to having no heart to love the HOLY ONE of Israel, who is the God of glory; which beyond all doubt is criminal, and that in a very high degree.

Were we acquainted with a man, who appeared to be without any spark of generosity or friendship in his heart, a man that cared not in the least for his neighbour's welfare, or for the public good, and even without natural affection to his own offspring, no feeling to any interest but his own; common sense would teach us to look upon such a character as very vicious. And if he was blind to the wants of the poor, and deaf to their cries, we should look upon that blindness and deafness of a criminal nature. And the more blind and deaf, the more criminal should we pronounce the man. And by parity of reason, if we are blind to the loveliness of the most excellent Being in the universe, discovered in the clearest and brightest manner, it must, by all holy beings, by all good judges, be looked upon as being of the nature of a crime. If a hard-hearted man justifies himself in being blind to the distressing wants of the poor, every self-justifying plea, in the eyes of his benevolent neighbour, will render his character so much the more vile and odious. And if to be blind to the beauty of the divine nature, ever so clearly revealed, is

no crime; then it is no crime not to love God: i. e. no crime to live in the breach of the first and great command, and no crime to be without that which is the chief foundation of all religion. And we may as well say, there is no crime in a total disregard to all being, in general, and in being entirely under the government of selfish affections. Which is as absurd as to say, that there is nothing in the system, worth the least regard but ourselves. And therefore in the language of Scripture, a *heart of stone*, that is, a blind, senseless, stupid heart, is one name given to a wicked ungodly heart. Because, in Scripture account, to be as blind, senseless, and stupid to the glory of divine things as a stone, is of a criminal nature. A heart of stone is a wicked heart. Our blessed Saviour, by all he said and did, gave himself a character without a blemish, perfect in beauty. His disciples were but poor illiterate fishermen, *beheld his glory, as the glory of the only begotten Son of God.* Others, who were gentlemen of good sense and a polite education, *wise and prudent*, were so far from discerning any *form or comeliness in him*, that they cried, *He is a Samaritan, and hath a devil; why hear ye him?* And therefore, as their blindness to the beauty of his character was not for want of natural abilities, or outward advantages, but owing entirely to the state of their minds, to the frame of their hearts; so it was altogether of a criminal nature. And they had no *cloak for their sin*, in our Saviour's judgment. To say, they had some cloak, and were not altogether criminal in their blindness, is to say, there was some blemish in our Saviour's character; which is no better than downright infidelity.

II. Spiritual blindness, which originally consists in a want of relish for holy beauty, for that beauty which is peculiar to holy beings and holy things, and is criminal, considered as such; is capable of being greatly increased and confirmed through the exercise and influence of the various corruptions of a wicked heart, whereby it may become criminal in a still higher degree. And here *the God of this world* may have a great hand in blinding the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel should shine unto them.

Thus to a worldly heart, the devil may possibly present the glory of this world, the glory of riches, honours, and pleasures, in so strong a light, as quite to carry away the mind from all serious thoughts about God and Christ, and a future state. *They say unto God, depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* So that when the Gospel is preached in all its glory, it shall not be able to gain the least regard; nay, not so much as to gain the least attention of the mind. And when sermon is over, like the generality of the Jews in Christ's day, *they make light of it, and go their way, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize.* By this means multitudes, if not by far the greater part of ungodly men, under the Gospel, live and die so inattentive to the Gospel scheme, as never to gain any considerable acquaintance with it. They are too indifferent about the matter ever to get what is called a doctrinal knowledge of the Christian religion. So also the young and gay part of mankind, are eager in the pursuit of pastimes, merriments, and sports, to the entire neglect of all divine things, while satan is not wanting to do all he may to push them on, that they may never attend to the glorious Gospel of Christ. And while mankind thus serve divers lusts and pleasures, and live in malice and envy besides, hateful and hating one another, the Gospel is to them, like the seed which fell by the way-side, all thrown away and lost.

But if by the various shocking calamities of this life, and the apparent certainty of death, or through the awakening influences of the Holy Spirit, or by any other means, wicked men are rendered attentive to the Gospel revelation, and solicitous about their eternal interest; yet if, upon a nearer view of things, their native dislike to God's holy law, takes occasion to arise and ferment, it may finally and for ever keep them blind to the glory of the Gospel of Christ. And all their study and pains may only lead them into that wilderness of secret scepticism, where many professed Christians wander and are lost; not knowing what they are, nor where they are, nor what to believe, nor what to expect: but are at a total uncertainty about every thing themselves, and imagine it entirely owing to want of thought, that all mankind are not as

much puzzled as they be. While others are driven by their prejudices against the divine law and glorious Gospel into open infidelity, not in the least suspecting that the fault is in themselves. While others of just the same temper, through false and delusive joys, from a groundless persuasion of God's love to them, profess the greatest zeal for the Gospel, which, at the same time, rightly understood, they disbelieve and hate with all their hearts.

If a man begins to study the bible, he will soon find, that according to that book, all mankind are naturally under a law which requires perfect obedience on pain of eternal death; and that this law, by which all mankind stand guilty before God, is esteemed holy, just, and good: and that it was in this view God gave his Son to die in our stead: to be made a curse to redeem us from its curse. But how blind must a man be to the wisdom of God in the death of his Son, to whom the divine law appears so far from deserving such high honour, as rather to be a blemish in the divine character, that ever God made it. And how shocked, stumbled, and confounded, must such a man be at the cross of Christ?—Unless some cunning way can be contrived to delude one's self. "He died for me," says one, "even for me in particular; and I verily believe I shall have life and salvation by him." And thus all difficulties are solved in a moment. For if he is safe, he cares not how. If he is freed from the curse, he is content the law should be reputed holy, just, and good. Although, in any other view, he cannot think of it without hatred and heart-risings.—"He died to purchase an abatement of the law," says another. Not considering that if the law was before, just what it ought to be, holy, just, and good, it needed no abatement. And if the law was not so good as it might have been, the absolute perfection of the divine nature would have effectually moved the Deity to bring it to be perfectly holy, just, and good; nor was any Mediator needed in the case.—"But surely," says the benighted soul whom the god of this world hath blinded, "if I do as well as I can, I shall be saved. For it cannot be just to require of me more than I can do, and then damn me for not doing." O sinner, if you have a heart to do all, that in reason you ought to do,

to recommend you to the divine favour, do it: and you shall live. But then remember, there is no occasion that Christ should do any thing for you. You will have done enough for yourself. And so Christ is dead in vain, and Christianity is overthrown.

"But," says the sinner, and in what he says he discovers how blind he is, how far from seeing the beauty of the divine nature as it shines in the law and the Gospel, and in all the divine dispensations toward mankind from the beginning; and how far from believing with all his heart, and acquiescing with all his soul, in the Gospel-way of salvation through the blood of Christ; how loath to take that blame to himself which belongs to him; and how ready to impute iniquity to his Maker—"But," says the sinner, if no doings of mine will entitle me to life, if the law I am under requires more than I can do, and damns me for the least failing; then I am in an undone state in spite of my utmost efforts. And where is the justice of this? Or how is this consistent with the goodness of the divine nature? For God to bring me into a state of being worse than not to be, and then to hold himself unobliged to grant me any relief, at liberty to have mercy on whom he will have mercy! O that I had never been born! or that I could now cease to be! O why has God thus dealt with me? Did I sin and fall in Adam? Nay, I never chose him to be my representative. It was he that eat the forbidden fruit, and not I, and that thousands of years before I was born [t]." So that it appears to him, that the whole of the divine conduct toward him has been hard, unjust, and injurious. And satan, the god of this world, delights to hold him bound down under this blindness, that the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ may never shine into his heart; but rather, that as the Israelites provoked God to give them up by their murmurings; (Num. xiv.) so it may come to pass in this case. And so he become more and more irritated against the divine Majesty; till led by satan, he may grow bold to catch hold of some false comfort, or to deny that there is any such God, or law, or Gospel, and so get ease; or

[t] See Mr. Edwards on original sin, for the solution of difficulties relative to that doctrine.

otherwise sink down into despair, and an habitual blasphemous temper, in as near a resemblance of the devil as he can bring him; who naturally desires that all intelligences may think as ill of God and of his government, as he himself does.—Or it may answer satan's ends in some cases perhaps as well, if he can lead one to believe, that God has altered his mind, has judged his law too severe, has given it up, has appointed his Son to die, and by his death to establish a milder constitution, in which we are not obliged cordially to approve the divine law with application to ourselves, and look only to free grace through Jesus Christ; but allowed to look upon the law as too severe, and upon the Gospel as designed in our favour, a remedy against that severity. I say, this perhaps may answer the devil's ends as well; for on this scheme God's original and only law is given up as tyrannical; and the gift of Christ to die, instead of doing honour to the law, is rather an acknowledgment that we had been hardly dealt with, and designed to make us amends, and do us justice. So God, just as the devil would have it, must have passed for a tyrant, had he not given up his law, and appointed his Son to die for us, as it were by way of restitution, to make us amends and do us justice.—This is the character the devil, that avowed enemy to God, his law and government, would be glad to fix on the Almighty; that his own expulsion out of heaven, for a breach of the divine law, might be universally looked upon, as a cruel, tyrannical act, through all God's dominions; and it come to be the general opinion, that God, in his case also, is obliged in justice to grant some relief. Nor can any thing suit the devil better, than to see Christian divines grow zealous to prove that his punishment, consistent with the divine perfections, cannot be eternal. Could he bring the whole system to be of this mind, and had he power sufficient on his side, we may easily guess what a grand revolution he would soon make in the empire of the GREAT ETERNAL. He would treat God the Father as the Jews treated God the Son, and from the same spirit. But the throne of the Almighty is established for ever and ever: God reigns, and will for ever reign: and blessed be his glorious name for ever. And let all that love him, say, *Amen*.

It is plain from Scripture, that satan, who was once an innocent being, and in a state of probation, and under a law which threatened eternal destruction to the breaker of it, and who for his sin was cast out of heaven and doomed to eternal woes, is now an avowed enemy to God and his government. And if we view him as the god of this world, at the head of the powers of darkness, ruling in the children of disobedience, his attempts to dethrone God in the hearts of men, and set up himself in his stead, his great success may be seen in the universal ignorance of God, and wide spread of idolatry among all nations of the earth through a long succession of ages. Nor could the thunder of Mount Sinai prevent Israel from making a calf, nor all God's mighty works, nor the warnings and tears of his prophets keep idols out of the holy land; but from time to time they were eager to adopt the gods and the religious worship of the heathen. And what that was the apostle tells us, 1 Cor. x 20. *The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God.*

Such was his enmity against the most High; and his hatred of the divine law and government is equally manifest in all the methods he takes to prejudice mankind against religion in general. And particularly, in all the methods he takes to propagate an ill idea of the divine law, through the Christian world; that thereby the special design of Christ's death, to do honour to it, might not be attended to, or if attended to, the glory of the design not be seen.

And all this conduct of satan may be easily accounted for. For if the divine law, which threatens eternal damnation to the transgressor, is holy, just, and good, then the expulsion of satan out of heaven for his sin was a righteous act. If all mankind, like Israel of old, who when the curse of the law was twelve times pronounced, twelve times answered AMEN; I say, if all mankind should unite in a disposition understandingly to pronounce the divine law, holy, just, and good, they would therein virtually, as with one voice, declare for God, and against satan. And the justice of his punishment, being thus universally acknowledged in this world, where he claims to be a God, would ungod him, and

torn him into a devil, and put him to the utmost confusion; and would above all things tend to destroy his influence, and bring his kingdom to ruin, and open a way for the glory, the transcendent glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be seen among mankind. The consequences of which would be dreadful to the cause of satan in the world.

For only think a moment what the consequences must be. If the law is holy, just, and good, glorious and amiable, worthy to be magnified and made honourable, the devil is justly damned. It was a glorious and praise-worthy act in the Almighty, a beauty in his character, for which he deserves to be for ever loved and adored through his dominions, to doom him and his adherents to eternal wo. A fallen sinful world too are justly doomed to death. It was a godlike, glorious deed. An atonement of infinite value, to do honour to the law, and set sin in all its horrors, was needed; that God might sit upon a throne of grace, and yet be just. God's giving his Son to die was a most glorious display of all the divine perfections: Christ crucified, is the wisdom of God and the power of God; satan is a liar. All those ill thoughts of God and of his ways, which our wicked hearts are naturally inclined to suggest, and which satan loves to foment, are false and blasphemous: and the holy scriptures are infallibly the word of God; and it is our duty and highest interest to repent and turn to God through Jesus Christ. And if this should become the general sentiment, satan would soon have no subjects left. The holy Scriptures, I say, are infallibly the word of God, once grant the law to be holy, just, and good.

No book but the bible sets God so high, brands sin with such eternal infamy, and so effectually secures the divine authority. And pray, who was the author of this book? Not satan, I dare say, whose character stands condemned throughout, and who hates the whole genius and spirit of it, with all his heart. Not wicked men, who cannot bear with it, although proved to be divine by mighty works, and signs, and wonders. Not good angels nor good men, who could have no motive thus to impose their own sayings on mankind, as a revelation from heaven. No being in the universe could be the author of the bible but God himself: that very law, which

tempts a blind, wicked world to infidelity, is a full proof, that God, and none but God, could be its author.

And how void of any real weight, yea, how impious, to holy beings above, in whose eyes the divine Character is without a blemish, perfect in beauty, must our grand objection to the divine law appear? "*I have no heart to love the Lord*, and therefore it ought not to be required of me." Which, if we would be honest, is the only objection against the divine law, we have to make in this apostate world; unless we will impiously say, "that he is not infinitely amiable in himself; *i. e.* is not an absolutely perfect being, *i. e.* is not God; and so does not deserve such supreme respect at our hands." For it is contrary to common sense, to say that it is difficult to love a perfectly amiable character, which perfectly suits our hearts. And it is a dictate of common sense, that the more amiable a being is, the greater is our obligation to love him, and the greater our blame if we do not. And so, if God is infinitely lovely, our obligation, and consequently our blame, must be infinitely great. And so the penalty of the law is exactly what it ought to be.

"But we have lost our power to love God by the FALL, and it is a dictate of common sense, that it is not just to require more of us than we can do."—Pray, what power have we lost? Wicked men have no heart to love God, I grant. This is that in which their wickedness consists; they would not be wicked men, were it not for this. But had they an heart to love him, it would be an easy, sweet, delightful thing. We never complain of want of power to love the world.—It is easy to love the world. And why? Because the world is really more lovely than God? No; rather because we have an heart to love the world, but no heart to love God. The world suits our hearts, but God does not. Now, can our having no heart to love God, free us from our obligation, or lessen our blame? I appeal to common sense. Am I a father; I expect my child will love, honour, and obey me. Am I a master; I expect to be regarded as such. Should my child, should my servant, plead and say, "I have no heart," I should judge him to blame and worthy of punishment for that very thing. Mal. i. 6. *A son honoureth his father, and*

a servant his master; if I then be a father, where is mine honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts. Or shall we say, *The worse men grow, the less to blame they be.* A maxim the devil himself cannot but know to be false, how glad soever he might be, for the sake of his own character, to have it pass for true. Besides, this is the Scripture account of the matter.—For,

When God of old required the Israelites to love him with all their hearts, and to serve him with all their souls; and they appeared so forward to engage it; God, who fully knew what they were, and the only difficulty there was in the way of their yielding an entire obedience to his law, breaks out in this very expressive language, Deut. v. 28, 29. *I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee; they have well said all that they have spoken;* O THAT THERE WERE SUCH AN HEART IN THEM. As if he had said, "Then there would be no difficulty; and their promises might be trusted." But as the psalmist declares, Psal. lxxviii. 37. *Their heart was not right with him: neither were they steadfast in his covenant.* And again, Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12. *My people* WOULD NOT *hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up.*——In a word,

The fault is in our hearts, or the divine character; for it can be no where else; to say the fault is not in us, is to say, that it is in God. To say that our blindness to the divine Glory is not criminal, is to say that there is no glory in the divine nature. And whatever we plead for our justification, is implicitly to God's condemnation. For it is a plain case, that the Jews could allege nothing to justify their disrelish to the character of Jesus Christ, but what would be of the nature of a reflection upon that character. For if his character was good and amiable, they were to blame in not being struck with its beauty.

To say that we are *dead in sin*, by way of excuse, is to say that sin is not sin. For if sin is sin, then to be dead in sin, is the greater sin. That is, to be wholly under the power of sin, is more criminal than to be but partly under its power. Otherwise, sin is no more sin. For if the more sin-

ful we be, the less to blame we are, then sin is no more sin. It has changed its nature; and become an innocent thing.

Let the matter be strictly examined, and it will be found, that spiritual blindness, which has been thought rather a calamity than a vice, is really as much of a criminal nature as any kind of sin we can think of. It contains in it all kinds of wickedness in embryo. It is itself an aversion to all good. Its seat is in the heart. It is not owing to the smallness of our natural capacities; for satan, who is a being of great abilities, and of a fine genius, is as blind to the beauty of divine things as the most stupid sinner in the world. It is not owing to the want of external instruction; for Judas had as much of that as Peter. It is not owing to the terrors of the law and the fears of hell, and doubting of the love of God; for the Pharisees, who were in full expectation of eternal glory, were but the blinder for it. No: rather it is the very spirit of an apostate creature, to be blind to the beauty of the divine nature. It is the beginning of our disaffection to God, and it increases as our disaffection increases. It is the darkness of the prince of darkness, of the same nature with his blindness. It is that which gives the prince of darkness his chief power over us, to make us think, and feel, and act, as he would have us. It is that which constitutes us members of the kingdom of darkness, and prepares us voluntarily and of free choice to walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air. It makes us full proof against the clearest external manifestations which can be made of the divine glory. Having eyes, we see not; and having ears, we hear not; neither do we understand: although the glories of the God of glory shine all around us, in all his works, and in all his ways; even so that, in the view of the inhabitants of heaven, *the whole earth is full of his glory*.

To say that spiritual blindness is no crime, is in effect to affirm that there is no beauty in the divine nature. Which to assert, is subversive of all religion, natural and revealed.

To acknowledge that spiritual blindness is a crime, is to own it to be a breach of that law which requires us to love God with all our hearts, on pain of eternal wo. It is therefore to own it to be a crime infinitely blame-worthy, and for

which the eternal pains of hell are justly due; for every breach of that law is such: and this, beyond all doubt, is the very truth of the case.

But if spiritual blindness be thus criminal, no mercy can be expected from God in the case, on the foot of the law. So far from it, that if he deals with us merely according to strict justice, and renders to us according to our desert, he must punish us with eternal damnation for it. So far, so very far, is God from being obliged to grant us the enlightening influences of his Holy Spirit. As the gift of his Son, to be a Redeemer, was an act of the freest grace to a revolted, guilty world; so the gift of his spirit, to be an enlightener, is an act of grace equally free. He passed by the sinning angels, and did not give his Son to die for them; and he is at liberty among the sons of men to pass by whom he pleases, as to the gift of his spirit. And in this affair he actually doth *have mercy on whom he will have mercy. The elect obtain, and the rest are blinded.* And his conduct is plainly vindicable, once granting that our blindness is our sin; and that God might justly have held all mankind bound by law, and never provided relief of any kind. And if we affirm that God could not justly have held all mankind bound by law, but was obliged to provide relief, the whole Gospel, which claims to be of mere grace, is overthrown. We must then own the law to be good, and our blindness to be our crime, and God at liberty to relieve us or not, according to the good pleasure of his will, or turn infidels: or, which is as bad, be inconsistent, and so self-condemned, as heretics, after two admonitions, were wont to be, in the apostolic age.

SECTION XI.

The nature of Divine Illumination.

AS the Gospel is *hid to them that are lost*; and as all who *believe not are blind* to its glories; so, on the other hand, all true saints see its glory. *The light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God, shines unto them. The*

light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ shines in their hearts. And *beholding the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord.* Thus the matter is expressed in the unerring oracles of truth. But, What is the glory seen? How is it seen? What is the nature of the sight? And why is it represented to be peculiar to the saved? And wherein does it differ from what unregenerate men may experience?

I. The glory seen is DIVINE GLORY. It is the beauty and amiableness of God's moral character, on the account of which, the Deity is infinitely lovely in himself.—It is the glory of God's moral perfections, which renders him the supreme delight of angels and saints. The apostle expressly calls it, *the glory of the Lord.* And again, *the glory of God.* It is the very glory and beauty of the divine nature itself; a glory as peculiar to God, as his own divinity is. Yea, it is the brightness of the very divinity itself. So that he who hath seen this glory, hath in the language of Scripture, *seen God,* Matt. v. 8. and *known God,* John xvii. 3. 1 John ii. 4. and consequently is able to distinguish between the true God, and all other beings, real or imaginary: as he who hath seen the natural sun, can distinguish it from a glow-worm. In reference to this, therefore, all true saints are spoken of in Scripture as having *an unction from the holy One, whereby they know all things,* (1 John ii. 20.) because he who rightly sees God, as he has manifested himself in the Gospel, does virtually know the whole of Christianity; yea, the whole of divine revelation. And therefore it is added by the apostle, ver. 27. *And ye need not that any man teach you, but the same anointing teacheth you all things, and is truth, and is no lie.* And on this account it is represented as impossible, that such should be seduced by the most artful heretics, to imbibe that false idea of God, which is the spirit, life, and soul, of all their false schemes of religion. For as this anointing *hath taught* you, *ye shall* abide in him. And therefore, it is represented, as being *impossible the elect should be deceived;* (Matt. xxiv. 24.) while on the other hand, it is declared, that *all that dwell upon the earth shall worship the beast, whose names*

are not written in the Lamb's book of life. Rev. xiii. 8. Thus the glory seen is the brightness, beauty, amiableness of God's true and real character, as exhibited to view on the cross of Christ [u].—— But,

II. How is this glory seen?—This sight of the glory of God is no abstract metaphysical idea, hatched in the fancy of philosophic, speculative men: far from it. *Not many wise men, not many learned,* says the apostle, *but the foolish things of this world hath he called.* Nor is it any thing irrational and visionary, the fruit of the teeming imagination of melancholy souls. No, it is perfectly rational, and divinely noble. It is not seen by the eyes of the body, nor is it seen by the imagination, nor is it seen by the force of a penetrating genius. *Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* It is often *hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to babes.* A poor illiterate fisherman, divinely enlightened, might see it with as much ease as he could behold the glory of the sun shining in its strength. All true saints, in the apostlic age, saw this divine glory, how mean soever their birth, how low soever their genius, as St. Paul affirms, *We* ALL *with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.*

But how did they see it?—Pray tell me; how is the beauty of any character seen among men?—Universal experience teaches us, that characters appear agreeable or disagreeable, just as they suit our taste or not. To an angel, who has a taste for holy beauty, God's moral character appears infinitely amiable; but to the devil, who is a being of a contrary taste, God's moral character appears just the reverse. To the

[u] What that character of God is, which is exhibited to view on the cross of Christ, and what is implied in its being glorious, has been already shown. God our Creator was in himself infinitely worthy of our supreme love; and so his law which required this on pain of eternal death, was a glorious law; and so it was a glorious thing in God to give his Son to die to do it honour, *to declare his righteousness that he might be just, and yet justify him that believeth in Jesus.* And therefore, to see the glory of God in the face of Christ, implies a sight of the glory of God as Creator and Law-giver, and of the glory of his law: for Christ on the cross, dying to do honour to the law, is glorious only on supposition the law was a glorious law, and worthy of this honour: as has been already proved.—These things are hinted now, that they may be kept constantly in the reader's view. Because there are false Christs, and false Gospels, and false glories, with which multitudes are deluded.

Pharisees, no character more odious, than that of Jesus Christ; but at the same time, *Martha, Mary,* and *Lazarus,* were charmed with this man. To the Jewish nation in general, who groaned under the Roman yoke, and longed for a Messiah to set them at liberty, to make them victorious, rich, and honourable; a Messiah in the character of a temporal prince, even such an one as they expected, would have suited their hearts to perfection, and so have naturally appeared a glorious Messiah.—And the news of his coming, of his victories, and of his rising, spreading kingdom, would have been glorious news. Such a Gospel would have been received among them as a glorious Gospel; there would have been no vail on their hearts; none would have been blind to its beauties; nor would its glories have been hid from any: but rather the carnal Jews in a body beholding in this Messiah the greatest worldly glory, would have been changed into the same image, had every answerable affection excited in their hearts. Had he thus come to his own, his own would have received him with all their hearts, joyfully enlisted under his banner, and followed him to battles, to victories, to universal empire; the very thing their hearts desired. But at the same time, a Messiah of such a character as this, would have charmed them; the character of Jesus of Nazareth shocked them to the last degree. *We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* Thus differently, to persons of different tastes, did the same character appear, for the carnal mind savours earthly things, but the spiritual mind the things which be of God. For *that which is born of the flesh, is flesh,* and *that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* In regeneration, there is a new, divine, and holy taste and relish begotten in the heart, by the immediate influences of the Spirit of God. And thus God *opens our eyes;* and thus God *shines in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* Or, as the same thing is expressed in different language, thus God gives them *an heart to know the Lord,* and thus he *circumcises their hearts to love the Lord;* gives them *eyes to see,* and *ears to hear,* and an *heart to understand.*—— For,

Spiritual blindness is not owing to the want of a penetrating genius, or to want of doctrinal knowledge; for the devil hath both these to a great degree, but still is as blind to the beauty of the divine nature, as the most ignorant Hottentot in Africa. For the moral character of the Deity is, above all things in the universe, contrary to the habitual temper of his heart. But that cannot appear lovely to us, which every bias of our hearts inclines us to hate. But heaven has declared, that *the carnal mind is enmity against God.* And the same divine revelation hath, in perfect consistence, as expressly declared, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* But in order to discern spiritually, the man himself must become spiritual. That is, be born of the spirit, *for that which is born of the flesh is flesh,* and *that which is born of the spirit is spirit.* And if Nicodemus said, *how can these things be?* Yet that was so far from a solid objection against the truth, that it was rather an illustration of it.

That the idea of a natural beauty supposes an internal sense, implanted by our Creator, by which the mind is capacitated to discern such kind of beauty, is clearly illustrated and proved, by a late ingenious philosopher [x]. And that the idea of spiritual beauty supposes an internal spiritual sense, communicated to the soul by the spirit of God, in the work of the new creation, is also as clearly illustrated and proved, by a late divine, whose praise is in all the churches [y]. It is needless therefore at present to enter further into this subject.

III. As to the special nature of this kind of knowledge, which the apostle calls *the knowledge of the glory of God,* it is different from every species of knowledge in the universe, not only as it is, in a peculiar sense, of divine original; but also, as it is in itself, of a divine and holy nature. To see the holy beauty of God's moral character, to see the beauty of holiness, to have holiness appear beautiful and seem lovely to the soul, is of the same nature as to love holiness; but to love holiness, is holiness itself. Among the peculiar people of God,

x Mr. Hutchinson, on beauty and virtue. p. 8. 15.

y Mr. Edwards, on religious affections. p. 158. 166.

of old, they had *a holy anointing oil,* with which they anointed, and by which they sanctified their tabernacle, altar, priests, &c. Exod. xl. This was the type; the antitype of which the apostle thus expresses, in the forecited text, as that which is common to all true saints, who are spiritual priests, consecrated to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. 1 John ii. 20. *Ye have an unction from the* HOLY ONE, *and ye know all things.* Ver. 27. *The anointing teacheth you of all things.* And perhaps the same thing is referred to in Rev. iii. 18. *Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.* It is an unction from the *Holy One,* an *holy anointing,* an *holy calling.* In the same degree that God appears lovely to the soul, in the same degree is he actually loved. The exercise of love is always in proportion to the degree of our sense of the divine beauty. For, *beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image.* The affections excited, are answerable to the views [z]. A sense of the divine loveliness, if we may so speak, is love in embryo: esteem of, delight, and complaisance in the moral character of the Deity, is love in internal exercise; a life devoted to his service, to advance his honour and interest in the world, is love operating in good works. And *then are ye my friends, if you do whatsoever I command you.* But each of these are plainly of the same nature, holy and divine. And each are equally enjoined as matter of duty in that first and great command, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.* Therefore we are by God himself thus called upon, *Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your*

z And by the way, this may show the difference between a rational conviction that God is lovely, and a sense of his loveliness. A man may from rational arguments be convinced in his conscience, that God is lovely; and yet have no sense of his loveliness in his heart, nor any love to him. Satan knew in his conscience, that the holy character which God gave of Job, *there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man,* was an amiable character; but this character was so far from exciting love, that it excited envy and hatred in his heart. He wished to be able to prove Job an hypocrite, i. e. that all his love to God arose merely from self-love. *Doth Job fear God for naught.* So a wicked man may be convinced in his conscience, that God is an amiable Being; and yet be so wicked, as that he cannot bear to think that any saint on earth loves God for his own loveliness. And the reason may be learnt from 1 John iii. 12.

heart. Jer. iv. 9. And again; *Make you a new heart, and a new spirit.* Ezek. xviii. 31.

For it is the duty of all to whom the Gospel comes, to look upon it as a glorious Gospel, and to have their hearts charmed with its beauty. To be blind to its glory is criminal, as was before shown; and to see its glory is for the same reason, a duty. And therefore, all who are blind to the glory of the Gospel, and so disbelieve and reject it, are expressly threatened with eternal damnation. But such an infinite punishment supposes the crime to be infinitely great. The infinite greatness of the crime supposes we are under infinite obligations to the contrary. That is, under infinite obligations to look upon the Gospel as glorious, and cordially to believe and embrace it. And indeed its own intrinsic infinite beauty, lays us under infinite obligations; and not to esteem what is so infinitely worthy of our esteem, must be infinitely criminal.

To say, that it is not our duty to look upon the Gospel of Christ as a glorious Gospel; that is, to look upon the divine prefections therein so clearly manifested, as glorious; is to say, that we are not obliged to look upon God himself, as a glorious Being, when set in the clearest light before our minds. Which is, in effect, to say, that it is not our duty to love God. Which is to give up natural and revealed religion both at once: and to pronounce the deepest depravity, perfectly innocent.

Had mankind, to whom the Gospel comes, a genuine relish for holy beauty, a taste for the beauty of God's true character, they would naturally discern the glory of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. If they knew God the Father, they could not fail to know his Son. Had mankind as high a relish for divine glory, as they have for the glory of this world, the glory of the Gospel would strike the mind as naturally as the glory of an earthly kingdom now does.

Had the Jews, for instance, had as high a taste for a spiritual Messiah, as they had for a temporal one, Christ crucified would as naturally have appeared glorious, as their expected Messiah, a temporal prince, was wont to do, in their

fond imaginations. We have no inability to know and love God and Jesus Christ, but what is altogether of a criminal nature. And therefore our Saviour's conduct may be vindicated, in pronouncing such a heavy wo on the inhabitants of Corazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, because they *repented not.* For if the fault is wholly in us, it is no doubt increased, as our external advantages are increased.——But,

IV. Why is this kind of knowledge, of which we are speaking, constantly represented in Scripture, as peculiar to *the saved,* (1 Cor. i. 18.) to *the called,* (ver. 24.) to *the spiritual,* (Chap. ii. 14.) to *the changed,* (2 Cor. iii. 18.) to those who *believe,* (Chap. iv. 4.) to those who *love God and keep his commands,* (1 John ii. 4.) and who have *eternal life?* (John xvii. 3.) and why is it affirmed, that *whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, nor known him?* (1 John iii. 6.) and that, *he that doth evil hath not seen God?* (3 John 2.) and of every *natural man,* without exception, *neither can he know them?* (1 Cor. ii. 14.) It is, in a word, because it implies a contradiction that it should be otherwise. For this kind of knowledge, and its effects, are necessarily connected. And this kind of knowledge cannot exist in an unregenerate mind. For, to use the language of Scripture, *that which is born of the flesh is flesh;* and the carnal mind is enmity against God. And what fellowship hath light with darkness? Or what concord is there between sin and holiness? Or what agreement between a carnal heart, and that character which it is at enmity against? Our Saviour judged it implied the greatest absurdity, that satan should cast out satan; that is, that satan should be against himself. But it is plainly an absurdity equally great, to suppose, that two intelligent Beings, of characters as diametrically opposite as sin and holiness, should relish each other's characters, and appear amiable in each other's eyes. Once granting that FALLEN MAN is totally dead in sin, destitute of the least spark of spiritual life, of the least remainder of divine relish, or in the words of the apostle, that *the carnal mind is enmity against God;* (and by *the carnal mind,* he declares himself to mean every man who is destitute of the spirit of Christ; Rom. viii. 7, 8, 9.) I say, once granting this, and it is certain, and is even capable of strict demon-

stration, from the nature of things, that a sense of the amableness of God's true and real character, must of necessity be peculiar to the regenerate. False notions of God may ravish an unregenerate heart, but his true character every such heart is in fact at enmity against. Hence the Gospel will be hid from all natural men, be they Jews or Greeks, however wise, however prudent, however penetrating, and however well instructed; and that even while sitting under the ministry of Christ himself, who spake as never man spake; and notwithstanding all the preaching of his inspired apostles. Thus the Scriptures affirm that, in fact, it proved. And thus, the reason of the thing, shows it must for ever prove.

It implies a contradiction, to suppose the human heart should be charmed with a character just opposite to its own. And nothing can be plainer, than that the character of the HOLY ONE of Israel is diametrically opposite to the temper of one who is quite dead in sin. The divine character, therefore, must be altered in our imagination, or we, in fact, be born again, or God can never appear to us an amiable Being. If we suppose God's character altered and accommodated to our taste, we may be charmed with the fiction, dead in sin as we are. But the clearer view a carnal man hath of the truth, the more certain will he be that the love of God is not in him. Rom. vii. 8, 9.

It is true, many a carnal man is ravished to think that God loves him, and will save him; but in this case, it is not the true character of God which charms the heart: it is not God that is loved. Strictly speaking, he only loves himself. And self-love is the source of all his affections. Or, if we call it love to God, it is of no other kind than sinners feel to one another. *For sinners love those that love them.* The carnal Israelites, who gave the fullest proof of their disaffection to the divine character, as exhibited by God himself before their eyes, yet were once full of this kind of love at the side of the Red sea. Our being ravished ever so much in a belief that God loves us, is no sign that God's true character would suit our taste, had we right notions of it. The hypocritical Galatians loved Paul while they considered him as the instrument of their conversion, and means of their salvation; but on

further acquaintance with the man, they turned his enemies; for his character, rightly understood, did not suit their taste.

If God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; if he cannot look upon sin but with infinite detestation; if all those views, affections, thoughts, words, and actions, which are sweet to the taste of a carnal heart, are so infinitely odious in the eyes of God, as to appear to him worthy of the eternal pains of hell, as is in fact the case, (Gal. iii. 10.) it is as impossible that a carnal heart should see a beauty in the divine character, as that it should view its own character as being infinitely odious. For one implies the other. If it is beautiful in God to be affected toward my character, as in fact he is, my character must be infinitely odious: nor can I at any time, from the heart, look upon God as a lovely Being, without looking upon myself as infinitely hateful. For that being whose nature it is, to look upon me as infinitely odious, is not lovely, unless I am in fact infinitely odious.—When our Saviour, speaking to the Pharisees, said, *ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?* These words determined his character in their eyes. And it implies a contradiction, to suppose, that Christ's character might have appeared lovely to them, without their own appearing odious, answerable to the import of his words.—But there was nothing in a Pharisee's heart to lead him to look upon his own character in such an odious light. And, therefore, all our Saviour's declarations, and all his miracles, did but exasperate them. The more they knew of Christ, the more they hated him. As it was natural to them to approve of their own character, so it was natural to condemn his. For, if the fault was not in them, it was in him. To say it was not in him, was to own that they were *serpents, and a generation of vipers, worthy of eternal destruction.* To look upon him as altogether lovely, was to look upon themselves as infinitely odious. But this was diametrically opposite to every bias in their hearts. Their old heart, therefore, must be taken away, and a new heart be given them, or they could never view things in this light. And thus our Saviour understood the matter. And, therefore, on a time, speaking

to a Pharisee, he said, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*——But,

V. Wherein does this peculiar knowledge of God differ from what natural men have actually had, or might have? If they may have *all knowledge, and understand all mysteries,* so as to speak as it were with *the tongues of men and angels;* (1 Cor. xiii.) if they may be *enlightened, and taste the heavenly gift:* (Heb vi.) if they may *receive the word with joy:* (Matt. xiii.) if they may *escape the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ:* (2 Pet ii. 20.) if they may have such a ravishing sense of the divine goodness, as the Israelites had at the Red sea; and such an affecting sense of his majesty, greatness, power, holiness, and justice, as they had at Mount Sinai, when they stood trembling before the mountain, and were so ready to promise, *whatsoever the Lord our God shall command, that will we do, and be obedient;* and such an high and heart-abasing sense of *the most high God, who liveth for ever,* as *Nebuchadnezzar* had, when he *praised and extolled, and honoured the King of heaven, all whose works are truth; and those who walk in pride, he is able to abase,* (Dan. iv. 34. 37.) If they may have all this, what is it they cannot have? I answer, in one word, the holy beauty of God's real moral character; this is what they never had the least idea of. The most enlightened, affected, the devoutest natural man that ever lived, as to this, is as blind as the most ignorant, stupid sinner in the world. That this is in fact the case, is evident from this, that all who *behold the glory of God,* are actually *changed into the same image;* which was not the case with the wicked Israelites, nor with Nebuchadnezzar, nor with the stony ground hearers, nor with those in 1 Cor. xiii. Heb. vi. 2 Pet. ii.

But as the nature of divine illumination is so largely and accurately stated in Mr. Edwards' Treatise on Religious Affections, and his Sermon on Jam. ii. 19. I shall refer the reader to these pieces, and proceed.

SECTION XII.

The Effects of Divine Illumination.

A VIEW of all the moral perfections of GOD, shining in their brightest glory in the Gospel-way of saving sinners, exhibits to the mind an evidence of the truth of the Gospel, entirely new, which never struck the mind before. An evidence of such a nature, as removes all those natural prejudices against the truth, which tended to keep the mind in suspense, notwithstanding all the external proofs from the miracles, prophesies, &c. and an evidence, in its own nature, the most convincing and satisfying; and whereby the whole heart is gained, and brought over to a full and thorough belief of the Gospel. So that now, and not till now, is the Gospel believed to be true, *with all the heart;* so as to induce us to *sell all* for the pearl of great price, and from the heart to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Christ; venturing our all for time and eternity, upon the truth of his Messiahship, of his divine mission, and of the news which he has brought to our ears.

When the Gospel, which is hid from all natural men, comes to be revealed, internally revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, in all its divine glories, agreeable to Mat. xi. 25. 2 Cor. iii. 18. chap. iv. 6, &c. it is known to be from God, from the divinity of its nature. For it appears to be, what the apostle's words import, *the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God.* 2 Cor. iv. 4. And to use the words of a late writer, "He that truly sees the divine, transcendent, supreme glory of those things which are divine, does as it were, know their divinity intuitively; he not only argues, that they are divine, but he sees that they are divine; he sees that in them wherein divinity chiefly consists; for in this glory, which is so vastly and inexpressibly distinguished from all other glory, does mainly consist the true notion of divinity: God is God, and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above them, chiefly by his divinity. They,

therefore, that see the stamp of this divine glory in divine things, they see divinity in them, they see God in them, and so see them to be divine; because they see that in them wherein the truest idea of divinity does consist." He therefore who sees the glory of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the IMAGE of God, must know Jesus to be the Son of God, and his Gospel to be divine. For he must be the Son of him whose image he bears, and that Gospel must be from God, which is, in its own nature, so godlike.—Besides, as the same author adds,

"This sense of the spiritual excellency and beauty of divine things, does also tend directly to convince the mind of the truth of the Gospel, as there are very many of the most important things declared in the Gospel, that are hid from the eyes of natural men, the truth of which does in effect consist in this excellency, or does so immediately depend upon it, and result from it, that in this excellency's being seen, the truth of those things is seen. As soon as ever the eyes are opened to behold the holy beauty and amiableness that is in divine things, a multitude of most important doctrines of the Gospel, that depend upon it, (which all appear strange and dark to natural men,) are at once seen to be true. As for instance; men by seeing the true excellency of holiness, do see the glory of all those things which reason and Scripture show to be in the divine Being. And hereby they see the truth of all that the Scripture declares concerning God's glorious excellency and majesty, his being the fountain of all good, the only happiness of the creature, &c. and this again shows the mind the truth of what the Scripture teaches concerning the evil of sin against so glorious a God; and also what the Scripture teaches concerning sin's just desert of that dreadful punishment which it reveals; and also concerning the impossibility of our offering any satisfaction or sufficient atonement for that which is infinitely evil and heinous. And this again shows the truth of what the Gospel reveals concerning the necessity of a Saviour, to offer an atonement of infinite value for sin. And this sense of spiritual beauty enables the soul to see the glory of those things which the Gospel reveals concerning the person of Christ; and so enables

to see the exceeding beauty and dignity of his person, appearing in what the Gospel exhibits of his word, works, acts, and life; and this apprehension of the superlative dignity of his person, shows the truth of what the Gospel declares concerning the value of his blood and righteousness; and so the infinite excellency of that offering he has made to God for us, and so its sufficiency to atone for our sins, and recommend us to God. And thus the Spirit of God discovers the way of salvation by Christ, &c. The truth of all these things appears to the soul only by the imparting that spiritual taste of divine beauty which has been spoken of. They being hidden things to the soul before." Thus far this author, who has handled this subject at large, and with greater accuracy than I have seen it done by any other writer [a].

And agreeable to these sentiments, it was an openly avowed maxim in the apostolic age, that *whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.* 1 John v. 1. and they every where publicly declared, *that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* Rom. x. 9. They promised salvation to every man, who with all his heart believed the Gospel to be true, and threatened damnation to none but infidels, according to their master's commission. Mark xvi. 15, 16. *Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* Not that they imagined, that every one who professed to believe the Gospel with all his heart, really did so. They knew there might be a partial and ineffectual conviction of the truth. They well remembered how Judas heard all Christ's discourses, and saw all his miracles, and professed to believe as well as Peter, and how he turned out in the end. And they well knew, that as both were under equal external advantages, to see all the external evidences of Christ's divine mission; so that peculiar kind of faith, which Peter had, was entirely the result of divine illumination, as their master had in his life time expressly declared. *Flesh and blood hath not revealed*

a Mr. Edwards, on Religious Affections, p. 182. 199.

it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. Mat. xvii. 17. And this kind of faith they called *believing with all the heart,* and asserted it to be peculiar to the regenerate, and infallibly connected with eternal life. A faith, in its own nature, specifically different from the faith of devils and of wicked men, who are all equally blind to the glory of the moral perfections of the Deity shining so brightly in the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And now, when the Gospel is *understood,* seen *in its glory,* and believed *with all the heart,* it immediately begets every answerable affection in the soul. For we are *begotten through the Gospel,* 1 Cor. iv. 15. *begotten by the word of truth,* Jam. i. 18. *sanctified by the truth,* John xvii. 17. and particularly *are begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead,* 1 Pet. i. 3. While the glory of the Gospel is hid, it produces none of these effects upon the soul. *For if our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* 2 Cor. iv. 3. But when we KNOW *the truth, the truth makes us free.* John viii. 32. Or in the language of St. Paul, *we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image* [b].

Sometimes, in the Scripture, the effect produced by the knowledge of the truth, is considered and spoken of as one thing, and every holy affection is summed up under one comprehensive name. As, *the image of God, the law written in the heart, Christ formed in the soul, coming to God by Christ,*

b Some of the above texts are alleged by some writers to prove, that a belief that Christ died for me in particular, that my sins are pardoned, and that I shall be saved, begets every Christian grace. And this is all the regeneration they allow of. But in this case we are begotten, not by the truth, nor by the Gospel; for not one of these particulars are therein revealed. Yea, a man may be full of religious affections from such a belief, and yet at the same time look upon the Gospel of Christ as "jargon;" "hideous jargon." Yea, it is a lie which begets these affections, viz. *that God had forgiven the sins of an impenitent sinner.* And therefore, not the God of truth, but the father of lies, is the author of this kind of regeneration. And this is one of his stratagems to *blind the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* Thus he *transforms himself into an angel of light,* to delude poor sinners with false hopes and false joys; to the end they may never *know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent;* and so never have eternal life. See Mr. Cudworth's Further Defence.

reconciliation to God through Christ, &c. At other times, there are a great variety of names used to mark out the various affections excited in the mind by the knowledge of the truth: the various affections toward God, and toward Christ, and toward the children of God, and toward mankind in general, and toward relatives, husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, &c. and toward enemies, and toward sin, and toward ourselves considered as sinners, and toward the things of this world, and of the world to come, &c. all which are the native result of the knowledge of the truth.

When Moses came down from the Mount, where for a long time he had conversed with the God of Israel, who manifested himself by a visible glory to him, he brought down the image of this visible glory with him, his face shone. He put a vail on his face, to hide the bright lustre thereof from the eyes of the congregation, who were not able to behold. So a *vail was on the hearts* of the unbelieving Jews in the apostolic age. The glory of the Gospel was hid by this vail from them, even from all that were lost.—But *we* ALL *with open*, with unvailed *face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are*, says the apostle, in allusion to the face of Moses, *changed into the same image*: into a holy, divine, a glorious frame of heart, resembling the glory we behold.

Changed into the same image. The image of what?—Of the moral perfections of the divine nature. Doth God view himself so worthy, so infinitely worthy of supreme love and honour, and universal obedience, as infinitely good and merciful as he is, yet sedately to judge, that the least defect in us deserves eternal wo; and that it does not become him, as the Judge of all the earth, in any one instance, ever to grant a pardon but through the mediation of his own Son, and on the sole account of his righteousness and atonement? The divinely enlightened soul has the same views, in kind, and an answerable frame of heart. "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest; for destruction is my due, and hell my proper home. And should strict justice take place, all heaven ought for ever to love and adore the infinitely glorious Majesty, crying, *Amen, Hallelujah.* Yea, so bad am I, that any thing better than eternal

damnation is too good for me. It is even unmeet such vileness should be passed over by the righteous Governor of the world without a testimony of his infinite abhorrence. There could be no hope in my case, were it not for the mediation, merits, and atonement of the Son of God. It could not have been just and right, to have pardoned such a wretch, had not he been set forth to be a propitiation But now *God can be just*. Therefore to free grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ, I look. Here is all my hope. And I give up myself to God through the great Mediator, to love him, and be for ever his: esteeming it the fittest thing in the world for ever to live to his glory, and the happiest thing to delight in him as the supreme Good. *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth I desire beside thee.*" And thus they are changed into the same image. And thus God accomplishes his word, *I will write my law in their heart.* The *law written in the heart.* This is another name given to the same thing, for the law is a transcript of the divine nature, the very image of God. As the law was written in indelible characters on tables of stone, by the finger of God, of old; so now, views and dispositions answerable to the nature of the law, become habitual in the heart, through the influences of the Spirit of God, according to the measure of grace received. And this becomes the genuine language of the soul. "How reasonable is it to love with all my heart such an infinitely glorious and amiable Being! And delight with all my soul in such perfect beauty! And take up my everlasting contentment in the fountain and source of all good! How fit, that I should be wholly for him, whose I entirely am! And be at his beck, whose hands formed me! And at his disposal, who is Lord of all things, and whose rectitude is absolutely perfect, and whose goodness and wisdom are infinite, and who has given his Son to die for a lost world! And how beautiful, how much to be desired, that all on earth should unite as brethren, to live in the dearest love and harmony, as one happy family, under the government of the common Father of our spirits, and who is ready to become our everlasting Father and Friend through Jesus Christ! O, that all the human race would join, with one heart, to re-

pent, and return, and be reconciled to God, through Jesus Christ! *Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*" And thus he begins to love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself; which was the very temper of Jesus Christ. And so *Christ is formed in him.* Which is another name given to the same thing, and the import of it may be thus expressed.

Christ formed in the soul.—" He took not on him the nature of angels. Those of them who fell, needed a Saviour as much as we. And they were a nobler rank of beings. But they were passed by: and so might we have been, and God had been for ever righteous. His law was holy, just, and good. Every mouth was stopped. The whole world stood guilty before God. How free was the grace, how great was the goodness, that provided such a Saviour for such a world as this! What love to God, what love to man, induced the Son of God to become incarnate! To honour the divine law by his obedience and death, and open a way for God to communicate his grace to us, and for us to return to God, and be for ever happy in him. To thee, O Lord, I return, with my whole heart, through Jesus Christ. In his name alone I come. O, may I be found in him, and have on his righteousness, and be accepted in the beloved; and be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise to the day of redemption, sanctified wholly to the Lord! O, may I be in Christ as the branch is in the vine, and partake of his nature and spirit; of his fulness receive, and grace for grace. That the *same mind which was in Christ Jesus*, and brought him from heaven, and carried him through all the labours of his life, and sufferings of his death, *may also be in me.* The same love to God and regard to the honour of his law, the same love to a lost world and concern for their salvation. And from this spirit, from which the Son of God became incarnate, lived and died, may I always stand ready to sacrifice in his cause all my earthly comforts, and if need be, to lay down my life." And thus, in these views, a spirit answerable to the temper of Jesus Christ, and to the design and spirit of his mediatorial office and work, is formed in the soul. And we become at

heart *his disciples.* And he is able to save them to the uttermost, who thus *come unto God by him,* seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Them that *come unto God by him.* Another description of the same thing. That *come unto God.* Unto *God,* the absolutely perfect, the infinitely glorious and amiable Being, infinitely worthy of supreme love and honour, and universal obedience, and the supreme good; in a view of whose *glory,* an *inclination* to *come,* is begotten in the soul. That come unto God by *him.* Encouraged by his mediation, righteousness and atonement, we are emboldened to enter into the presence of the HOLY ONE of Israel, in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and before whom such as we must needs appear infinitely odious and abominable. And thus, *if any man is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature,* possessed of a relish, of views, and affections, he never had before. Yea, *all old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.* And this whole change *is of God,* who thus *reconciles us to himself by Jesus Christ.* 2 Cor. v. 17, 18.

Reconciles us to himself *by Jesus Christ.* It is through Jesus Christ, who has secured the honour of the divine government, that God communicates those influences of his Holy Spirit, by which our eyes are opened to *behold the glory of the Lord.* And it is through Jesus Christ that the enlightened sinner is *emboldened to return to God.* And so this reconciliation is brought about wholly *through the mediation of Jesus Christ.* And in it, we are really reconciled to God, against whom we were before at enmity.

Reconciled to God.—To God's true and real character exhibited in his law, and ratified on the cross of Christ. We are reconciled to it, as to a character, in itself, without a blemish, perfect in beauty; and so begin to rejoice that God, his law and government, are just what they are, from a sense of their superlative excellency in themselves; no longer disposed, as we used to be, to wish they were different from what they are; rather inclined to say, *the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.* So reconciled, as that now,

The *divine law is cordially received as a rule of life* by us,

and our hearts begin to echo to the language of holy David, in the 119th Psalm, in its commendation.

Among all effects of divine illumination, there is none more remarkable in itself, or followed with more remarkable consequences, than this, that hereby the true convert who used to be an enemy to the divine law, is brought understandingly and heartily to love it, and to make it the rule of his life. The grace of God teaches him to *deny all ungodliness and every worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* Nor is there any thing which more evidently distinguishes a true conversion from every counterfeit than this. *Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.* For every natural man, of whatever sect or party in the Christian world, and however religious in his way, is at heart an Antinomian in this particular. He doth not, in fact, receive the divine law, in its true meaning and real extent, as the rule of his life; yea, so far from it, that if he should go about to do it, and if his conscience should in the mean time be awakened to understand it, all his religious affections would stand condemned by it in his conscience in a moment; and all his present hopes be struck dead by it at once. For there is not any one thing about him, any thought, word, or action, or any inward bias of heart, in conformity to the divine law, in a natural man. But one natural man is as really *dead in sin*, and devoid of all true holiness, as another. And the only thing that renders it possible for any natural man to think otherwise of himself, than that he is *dead in sin*, is ignorance of the true nature of the law. *Without the law, sin was dead. I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* What greater change therefore, can happen, than to be brought acquainted with the divine law, to be slain by it, and yet brought to love it, as holy, just, and good; so as to receive it cordially as a rule of life! What a marvellous alteration must this make in the whole system of our views and affections, and in the whole tenour of our lives! Even as great as to be *turned from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and satan, unto God.*

Every thing which comes into the view of the divinely enlightened soul, harmoniously unites together to induce him cordially to receive the divine law as a rule of life, by which to regulate every inward bias, every thought, word, and action. A view of God as an infinitely glorious Being, and our common Creator, shows how reasonable and beautiful it is for all mankind, who are fellow-creatures, children of the same common stock, to unite together as brethren, in supreme love and honour, and universal obedience to the Father of the universe, the God of glory, just as the divine law requires. A view of the divine law, as holy, just, and good, a glorious law, antecedent to the consideration of the gift of Christ, and the work of redemption by him, shows that our original obligations to do so are infinite. And this is also implied in a view of sin as an infinite evil; and in the view of vindictive justice as an amiable perfection in the Deity; as also in a view of God as the supreme good. A view of the incarnation, life, and death of the Son of God, to do honour to the divine law, in order to open a way for the pardon of the penitent believer, consistent with the honour of the supreme Governor of the world, sets before us the highest possible proof, of an external nature, of the goodness and excellency of the divine law; even the highest proof that could have been given by God the Father, or God the Son. Besides, we have herein a perfect obedience to the divine law, recommended to us by an example in itself the most engaging; set before us on design that we should imitate it; and set us by him who left his Father's bosom, and died on the cross, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us to himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Add to all this, the divinely enlightened soul, in consequence of the new taste and relish communicated in regeneration, (Rom. viii. 5.) begins to discern that it is not only the fittest, but the happiest thing in the world; yea, is even the beginning of eternal life, and foretaste of heaven, to aspire to be holy as God is holy, to love God and live to him, and live upon him, through Jesus Christ, and love the people of God, and love all mankind, and be and do in every respect as the divine law requires. Besides, the infinite obligations we are under hereunto, in point of gratitude to God

and to his Son, for the infinite goodness manifested in the work of our redemption. To all which, we may add, the eternal rewards which are to be granted by Jesus, our final Judge, to all his obedient disciples, at the last day, for services so sinfully defective, as not fit to be accepted, were it not for our union with, and relation to him, who is God's beloved Son, and heir of all things. For at that day, not so much as a cup of cold water, given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall be overlooked, or pass unrewarded. The highest rewards which the kings of the earth give to victorious generals, who have ventured their lives in their service in the wars, is some title of honour, or post of profit, a laurel leaf, a mere trifle; but Jesus gives an eternal reward in heaven, for but *a cup of cold water*. These, and all other things, which come into the view of the divinely enlightened soul, harmoniously unite together to induce him cordially to give God the throne, resign to his authority, be at his command, and receive his law as a perfect universal rule, according to which, to feel and think, to speak and act, through all his life, and to look upon himself infinitely to blame, wherein soever he comes short of yielding that perfect love and obedience which the law requires.

And what must be the consequence of this, considering that the best are sanctified but in part, and that the law requires sinless perfection? What, but *the law is spiritual, I am carnal, sold under sin, O wretched man that I am!* What, but a continual sense of infinite blame, a life of self-loathing, and self-abhorrence, of godly sorrow, of penitency, of brokenheartedness, of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, of watching, of prayer, of fighting, of striving, of running, of wrestling, &c. just as the New Testament represents the Christian life to be? And what must be the consequence of all this, but a growing sense of our need of, and absolute dependence upon, the free grace of God through Jesus Christ for pardoning mercy, and sanctifying grace every day? *We are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* And thus true saints are trained up to prize the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier, and live wholly by faith; while, at the same time, they are perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord.

And in this view, it is easy to see the reason, why a life of universal obedience is constantly represented in the holy Scriptures, as peculiar to true saints, in distinction from all false professors; as true saints are the only persons in the world, who cordially receive the divine law as a rule of life. *Matt.* vii. 21. 27. chap. xiii. 23.—John xv. 2. 6. 14.—Jam. ii. 10.—1 John ii. 3, 4, 5, 6. chap. iii. 3. 10. chap. v. 18, &c. &c.

And in this view, it is easy to see the reason, why humility is, at the same time, and in perfect consistence, represented through all the Scriptures as the chief part of a good man's character. An hypocrite being ignorant of the divine law, the more religious he is, the more proud and conceited will he be: but with a true saint, it is just the contrary. For if the divine law is his rule of duty, and if his obligations perfectly to conform thereto are infinite, and his blame for every defect proportionably great, and if the fault is wholly in him, if his remaining spiritual blindness is altogether criminal, his stupidity to the beauty of divine things wholly vicious, his want of perfect love to God and Christ, and the most tender regard to the welfare of mankind inexcusable wickedness, &c. &c. If this be the true state of the case, and if he views things in this light, a mean and low thought of himself, and an answerable frame of heart, as he has all the reason in the world for it, must be a very essential part of his character. Hab. ii. 4. *Behold his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him.* No greater proof, as man is ignorant of the truth, as it is in Jesus, than spiritual pride reigning in his heart. The graceless Pharisee, ignorant of the true sense of the divine law, was ready to say, *God, I thank thee, I am not as other men.* While to the penitent publican, in a view of the truth, it was altogether natural to smite upon his breast, and say, *God be merciful to me a sinner.* The Pharisees were ready to say, *behold, we see.* While the holy Psalmist lifts up his cry to heaven, *open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.* Psal. cxix. 18. Which is the genuine language of the heart of the most enlightened saint. For, says the apostle, Phil. iii. 13, 14. *I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forget-*

ting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

And to a man of a humble, broken, contrite heart, it will be easy to bear injuries, to love and forgive enemies; and natural in lowliness of mind to prefer others before himself, to render honour to whom honour is due, and as much as in him lies live peaceably with all men, according to the exhortations of the Gospel; besides, that such a frame of heart must be an excellent preparative to all social and relative duties. So that the character of a good husband, a good wife, a good parent, a good child, good neighbour, &c. meek, kind, just, honest, faithful, &c. will be the native result of divine illumination. And thus true saints are *the salt of the earth, the light of the world:* and while others *behold their good works,* they are constrained to *glorify their Father which is in heaven.* And the connexion between divine illumination and all holy living, is so certain and infallible, that it is declared from heaven, that *he that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him* For *we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.*

And as divine illumination thus lays the foundation for all Christian graces and duties; so at the same time it equally lays a foundation for all Christian comforts and consolation.

A view of God, the absolutely perfect, the infinitely glorious and amiable Being, as manifested in the Gospel of Christ, is a source of ineffable joy and consolation, to the divinely enlightened soul. The holy beauty of the divine nature, is, in itself, the most sweet and ravishing thing in the universe, which can be beheld by angels or men.—*Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory;* is the language of heaven in a transport. And the ineffable glory of the divine nature is the first and chief thing, which strikes the mind and charms the heart of him that is enlightened. This is *life eternal,* this is the beginning of heaven, *to* KNOW *thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*

A view of an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, at the head of the universe, presents before the mind an all-sufficient good; a glorious and ravishing sight, to a poor orphan, self-ruined creature, in want of all things: and a sight never before seen, and indeed no where else to be seen in heaven or earth. The joys which are the native result of this view, no words can fully express. It is *joy unspeakable and full of glory.* Psal. lxxiii. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee.*——For,

As in divine illumination, the mind is thoroughly convinced of the truth of the Gospel; so it appears to the soul, both that God can, consistently with his honour, and that he is willing to receive to favour, any, the most naked, forlorn, wretched, guilty, ill deserving, of the human race, which shall come unto God by Jesus Christ; and to become a God and father, and friend and portion, to them through him. Which is to see even God himself, the infinitely glorious God, the supreme good, presented to his choice, through Jesus Christ, as the portion of his soul. *All things are ready; come unto the marriage.* It appears to be a *feast.* He makes no excuse. But like the man in Mat. xiii 44. who having *found a treasure hid in a field, for* JOY *thereof, he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.* And so he drinks of that water spoken of in John iv. 10. 14. which *whosoever drinketh shall never thirst.* And when he comes sensibly to have God for his God, father, and portion, he is happier than if all the world were his own. Hab. iii. 17, 18. *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines,* &c. *yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.* Therefore, said the apostle to the primitive Christians, not in the least dejected for his part, although then a prisoner at Rome, and his converts in a state of persecution, "rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ." Phil. iv. 4. 6, 7. For, in choosing God for our

supreme good, all earthly idols are resigned, our treasure is laid up in heaven; and if grace flourishes in our hearts, our comforts will remain, let outward things go as they will. Besides, it is found by experience, that it is *good to be afflicted*; that *afflictions work the peaceable fruits of righteousness*; for *all things work together for good to them that love God*. And so the heart is reconciled to, yea, rejoiceth in God's ways toward the children of men in this life.——Besides,

To see an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, at the head of the universe, is matter of unspeakable joy. Both because it is an honour due to him, who is by nature God, to be supreme, to take the throne, to rule and reign, and to be worshipped as God: and because it is infinitely to the advantage of the intellectual system, to be under a government, in its own nature absolutely perfect. Psal. xcvii. 1. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of Isles be glad thereof."—Psal. xcvi. 1. "O sing unto the Lord a new song, sing unto the Lord, all the earth." ver. 4. "For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all Gods." ver. 8. "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." ver. 10. "Say among the heathen the Lord REIGNETH." ver. 11, 12, 13. "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar and the fulness thereof: let the field be joyful and all that is therein. Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the earth with righteousness, and the people with his truth." Psal. cxlviii. "Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the heights: praise him, all ye his angels: praise him, all his hosts," &c. &c. "For his name alone is excellent, his glory is above the earth and heaven," &c.——Besides,

A view of the divine law as holy, just, and good, a glorious law, and of vindictive justice as a beauty in the divine character, dispels those black, gloomy, blasphemous thoughts, which are apt to haunt benighted souls, and gradually leads the mind to discern the holiness, justice, and goodness, of God's general plan of government, as represented in the holy Scriptures from the fall of angels, down to the day of judg-

ment, and through eternal ages. Whereby a heavenly serenity and joy spreads through the souls of the saints, to see all God's ways to be right, and even those parts of his conduct, which, to many, appear so horrible, to be really beautiful in themselves, worthy of God, and to his eternal honour. *Of whom, and by whom, and to whom, are all things: to whom be glory for ever, Amen.* Rom. xi. 36.

Besides, the exceeding great glory to God and good to the saved, which in time and eternity are, according to the Scriptures, to result from the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of the Son of God, is an inexhaustible source of joy and consolation, to those who are divinely enlightened; as they are deeply interested in the honour of God and of his Son, and in the welfare of his holy and eternal kingdom. *Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will toward men,* was the joyful song of the heavenly hosts, at the birth of the Saviour. And the hearts of all the saints echo to it with ineffable consolation.——Moreover,

To love God, to love his holy law, to feel every answerable affection toward the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, to present and offer up our lives a living sacrifice to God, to love the people of God, to love all mankind, to love and forgive enemies, to go about the common duties of life in the fear of God, and as his servants, heavenly minded, of a meek and quiet spirit, composed, sedate, with our loins girt, always watching and always praying, is the happiest way of living on this side of heaven. The exercise of these and all other graces of the Christian life, is itself, a pleasure divinely sweet. *Wisdom's ways are pleasant, and all her paths are peace.* Prov. iii. 17. *Great peace have they that love thy law; and nothing shall offend them.* Ps. cxix. 165. In a word, a humble, broken, contrite heart, mortified to all earthly goods, and fortified against all earthly evils, and used to converse with the Deity, is attended with pleasures unspeakably preferable to all this world can boast.

Thus divine illumination lays the foundation for Christian graces and Christian comforts. They are connected together in the experiences of the saints, just as they are in the promises of God's word. For all the promises of God are in

Christ, yea, and amen. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls." Mat. xi. 28, 29. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit: to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the spirit of contrite ones." Is. lvii. 15. "For he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Luke xviii. 14. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him." John xiv. 21. Thus Christian graces and Christian comforts go together. And if the graces and comforts of the saints are at any time in a languishing state, it is owing to their spiritual blindness, which is altogether of a criminal nature; and so the fault is entirely their own. For the truths exhibited to view in the Gospel, beheld in their glory, are sufficient to make their graces and comforts always abound. And if the graces and comforts of the saints are in a flourishing state, it is entirely owing to spiritual light, or a sense of the glory of divine truths, communicated to them from God, of his mere self-moving goodness and infinite grace through Jesus Christ, to creatures infinitely unworthy: and so all the glory is due to him, *of whom, and by whom, and to whom are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

Thus we have taken a view, a very brief, general, imperfect view of the effects of divine illumination; and may now conclude this Section with a few remarks.

1. The graces and joys of saints on earth, and saints in heaven, are of the same nature. The same kind of holiness and happiness is begun in divine illumination in this world, as saints are possessed of in heaven, only in a much lower degree. Eternal life is begun in them. (John. xvii. 3.) They are *passed from death to life.* (John v. 24.) They begin to live. They begin to view things and feel toward them as they do in heaven. The same light which now shines, will *shine more and more unto the perfect day.* (Prov. iv. 18.)

At first it is very small like a grain of mustard-seed; but it is of the same kind with that perfect holiness and happiness which is above. And so it is an earnest of heaven. (Eph. i. 14.) Yea, it is of the same kind with the perfect holiness and happiness of Jesus Christ their head. For they are *made partakers of the divine nature.* (2 Pet. i. 4.) *Of his fulness they all receive, and grace for grace.* (John i. 16.) For he is *the vine,* and they are *the branches;* (John xv.) all animated by the same spirit, and possessed of the same kind of life. And indeed, there is but one kind of true holiness in the universe, whether viewed in God the Father or in Christ the Mediator, or in saints who are members of Christ. God is the original fountain and standard of true holiness; the moral law is a transcript of God's moral perfections, the very image of his heart; a perfect conformity to this law, through the greatest trials in life and death, constituted the mediatorial perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, our representative and our patron; and that holiness in believers, wherein they resemble Jesus Christ, consists in conformity to this same law. And herein it is distinguished from every counterfeit in the world. Let it once, therefore, be determined, what that moral character is, which God exhibits of himself in his law, and wherein its beauty lies, and what it is to love it, as the divine law originally required of mankind, and the nature of true holiness is ascertained beyond dispute [c].

And in this view, it appears with a striking evidence, that he who never beheld the glory of the divine law, never had any relish for holy beauty, or love to true holiness in his heart; and all his seeming love to Christ is nothing but exercise of selfish affections, occasioned by delusions, together with ignorance of Christ's true character. For the holiness

c Mr. Cudworth grants, that that kind of holiness I plead for, is that kind of holiness the divine law originally required, "The rightness of the original state of man." Further def. p. 225. And so it is that kind of holiness which was in Jesus Christ, and which is in heaven. And I readily grant, that it is specifically different from that kind of holiness which he pleads for. As he maintains, "there is no loveliness in the diaine nature to be conceived of, only in a belief that he loves me." p. 221, 222. The only question then is, whether there be two kinds of holiness, essentially different in their nature, and yet both of the right kind? A question easy to be answered.

of Christ as a mediator, was but a conformity to this original law: and if the law was not glorious, neither can there be any glory in a perfect conformity thereto. He, therefore, that is blind to the beauty of the divine law, is equally blind to the beauty of Christ, and equally blind to the beauty of the divine nature, and, indeed, to all holy beauty in the universe; whether existing in God, or Christ, or saints, or manifested in any part of the holy Scripture, or in any part of the divine conduct which ever came to our knowledge.

2. Unless we look upon the vindictive justice of the Deity as a beauty in the divine character, no Christian grace can be exercised, or Christian comfort enjoyed. For there can be no Christian grace, without love to God's real character, nor Christian comfort, without esteeming God the supreme good. But vindictive justice is essential to that character of God which is presented to the Christian's view in the cross of Christ, as well as in the whole of the divine conduct, from the fall of angels, down to the day of judgment. And one bad property, entirely approved of, and constantly exercised, will render any moral character devoid of beauty. And if there is no moral beauty in the divine character, he is neither worthy of supreme love, nor capable of being the supreme good to holy minds.—And if there is no love to God's character, nor delight in him as the supreme good, there is no Christian grace, nor Christian comfort.

If vindictive justice is not a beauty in the divine character, then it will follow, that there is no beauty in the divine nature, no beauty in the divine law, no beauty in the Gospel of Christ, no beauty in any part of God's universal plan of government; as vindictive justice spreads through, and is essential to the whole. And so, no ground or reason, upon the whole, for any one being in the universe to love God's character, or rejoice in his government: but all reason for the whole intellectual system to wish for an entire revolution in God's empire, to have every thing turned upside down, and put upon a new footing, and under another regulation.

To view the vindictive justice of the divine nature as a beauty in the divine character, is to see that all heaven ought for ever to love and adore the infinitely glorious Majesty, for

punishing sin according to its desert. Rev. xix. 1. 6. And unless it appears to us a beauty in the divine conduct thus to punish sin, we shall be at enmity against his whole plan of government, and can never understandingly, and from the heart, wish him well, or wish any of his subjects to pay him honour, unless we go on this stupid maxim, "If I am safe, I care not what becomes of others." And even this is to give up the honour of the Deity, as well as the welfare of our fellow-creatures; and in deed and in truth "to wish well to none but ourselves." And this is really, in one word, the life, and heart, and soul of all the religious joys any experience, who are blind to the beauty of the divine nature, and enemies to his law and government.

3. Divine truths spiritually known; *i. e.* seen in their divine glory, beget and excite all those holy affections which constitute the Christian character, even that the whole system of divine truths held forth to view, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, making up one harmonious, consistent, beautiful whole, hath influence, in this affair, to beget and excite all those holy affections which form the character of *a new man in Christ Jesus;* and which lay a sure foundation for that holy and divine life which agrees with the whole tenour of the bible, and is peculiar to the true followers of the Lamb. It is granted, that—

This whole system of truths, ever so clearly seen, by a mind of an ill taste, and to which the whole appears very disagreeable and odious, will excite dislike and hatred. As when, 1700 years ago, this whole system of truths were exemplified in the character of Jesus Christ, before the eyes of the wicked Jews, who, the more they knew of him the more they hated him.—*They have both seen and hated both me and my Father.* So the fallen Angels, the more they know of the truths contained in the bible, the more they hate them. And the same may be said of all the children of disobedience, who are left of God to their own hearts' lusts, and are under the power of the prince of the air, led captive by him at his will. For the carnal mind being at enmity against God, is of course, equally at enmity against that whole system of truth in which his true character is exhibited. And it is this which renders the regenerating in-

fluences of the Holy Spirit absolutely necessary in order that divine truths may be seen in such a light as to beget and excite all holy affections. The regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit are not necessary to make false schemes of religion seem lovely to a carnal heart: because such schemes are calculated for it, and in their own nature are adapted to suit carnal hearts. And were the scripture system of sentiments as agreeable to a carnal heart, as the system of sentiments contained in false schemes, it might appear agreeable and lovely, and excite answerable affections, without such influences; and so the doctrine of regeneration by the Holy Spirit might have been left out of the bible, just as it is out of all false schemes. But being what it is, *except a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.* The gospel will be hid from him. *For the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God.* Did the sum and substance of the Gospel consist in a revelation that *there is forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners*, or that *my sins in particular are forgiven*, I might without the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, merely from self-love, be ravished with this. Or did the sum and substance of the Gospel consist in a revelation, that such a civil, sober, honest life, will entitle me to heaven, as my present comfort and worldly interest naturally excites me to, I might be pleased with the Gospel-revelation, without any influences from above at all. And the like may be said in all similar cases. Again,

The Scripture-system of divine truths being one harmonious consistent whole, the true divine beauty of no particular truth can be seen by a mind at enmity against any part of the whole system: the nature of every particular divine truth being the same, exactly the same, as the nature of the whole. And for this reason, it is as easy to discern the beauty of one particular truth, of which the mind has a clear conception, as of another; one being, when rightly understood, no more contrary to a carnal heart than another. For instance, the true beauty of divine goodness, rightly understood, is as remote from the sight of a wicked man, as the true beauty of vindictive justice. And the reason it seems otherwise to many wicked men, is because their notion of God's goodness, and of God's justice, are not according to truth. For in God

these two perfections are perfectly harmonious. God's severity against sin, harmonizes with his goodness; and his goodness harmonizes with his severity against sin. For God's nature is in perfect harmony with itself. But wicked men are very apt to view the matter in a different light; and so while they hate one perfection, they imagine they love another. Or, to allude to the Manichean scheme, while they hate the God of the Old Testament, they love the God of the New; or, to express the same thing in modern language, while they hate God out of Christ, they love God in Christ. But all this is wholly owing to their mistaking the true nature of things. He who really loves any one of the divine perfections, on the account of its real loveliness, cannot fail to love them all, and he who is blind to the beauty of one, is equally blind to the beauty of all. For, in strict truth, all the moral perfections of God are really but one, as was before observed, although differently denominated, from their different exercises toward various objects. 1 John i. 5. *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* Perfect in beauty, without a blemish. Deut. xxxii. 4.—Isai. vi. 3. Moreover, let it be observed and carefully attended to, that,

All divine truths in general, and without any one exception, are suited to beget and excite holy affections in divinely enlightened souls. There is not one truth in the whole Scripture scheme, but what is *a doctrine according to godliness.* 1 Tim. vi. 3. And all jointly unite their influence to form the character of the godly man. Rom. vi. 17. *Ye have obeyed from the heart, that form of doctrine which was delivered you.* Is God represented in Scripture, as the Creator and Lord of all things? *O come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker,* is the effect. Psalm xcv. 6. Is God represented as the Governor of the world, and his government, as being like himself, absolutely perfect? *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof,* is the effect. Psalm xcvii. 1. Is God represented as the supreme good? *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth I desire besides thee,* is the effect. Psalm lxxiii. 25. Is God's law represented as holy, just, and good, a perfect law? *The law of the Lord is perfect,*

converting the soul: O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day, is the effect. Psalm xix. 8. and cxix. 97. And doth the divine law threaten eternal damnation for the least defect? And is it represented as glorious in this view? Gal. iii. 10. 2 Cor. iii. 7. 9. *Thou art righteous when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest; our mouth is stopped, and we stand guilty before God; and I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live to God,* is the effect. Rom. iii. 4. 19. Gal. ii. 19. Is there no other name but Christ's given under heaven whereby men can be saved? *To rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,* is the effect. Phil. iii. 3. Is it said, *be ye perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect?* The effect is, *I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth toward those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus* Phil. iii. 13, 14. The same might be said of every divine truth in the whole Scripture system; for they are all of them *doctrines according to godliness.*——And therefore,

We may easily, and with the greatest certainty answer this question: "Are men regenerated by the law, or by the Gospel?—If by *regenerated* is meant *enabled to see the holy beauty of divine truths,* we are regenerated neither by the law nor by the Gospel, or by any external means or instructions whatsoever; but by the immediate influences of the Holy Spirit. Mat. xi. 25. Chap. xvii. 17. John vi. 45. 2 Cor. iv. 6. If by *regenerated* is meant *holy affections being begotten and excited in the heart,* in this sense we are regenerated by the law, and regenerated by the Gospel, and regenerated by every divine truth in general. Agreeable to that of our blessed Saviour, (John xvii.) *Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.* For the divine law is God's word, as much as the Gospel. Every divine truth is the word of God. To say, that there are some particular divine truths which, although known, do not beget and excite in us holy affections answerable to their nature; is to say, that there are some divine truths which we do not love; which is to say, that we are hypocrites.

Objec. But does not St. Paul say, *I have begotten you through the Gospel?*

Ans. Very true.—And does not David say, *the law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul?* Only understand these texts in a consistency with each other, and you may be a consistent Christian. But if the character of God, as exhibited in the law appears odious to you, and excites hatred and heart-risings; while the character of God, which you imagine to be exhibited in the Gospel, appears lovely, and excites love and joy; you are not a Christian; you are a Manichean; you hate the God of the Old Testament, and love the God of the New. And so you have two Gods, of characters essentially different. But St. Paul's Gospel was built on this, as a fundamental maxim, that God's character, as exhibited in the law, was perfect in beauty, without a blemish. For, to do honour to this character, according to St. Paul, the Son of God became incarnate, and died on the cross, even *to declare his Father's righteousness, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of the believer.* St. Paul's Gospel comprised the whole system of divine truths, in their proper arrangement, in perfect harmony. To be begotten by his Gospel, is to have holy affections answerable to that whole system excited in us; and so, to become not Manicheans, but consistent Christians; *obeying from the heart that form of doctrine which he delivered;* and even reason teaches, that it must be so.——For,

If divinely enlightened souls have a relish for holy beauty, for such beauty as there is in God's real character; then every divine truth, as it exhibits his real character, will, if it comes into our view, appear beautiful; and will accordingly beget and excite holy affections answerable to its nature. But the divine law gives a very bright exhibition of God's real character, in its precepts, promises, and threatenings, as they are holy, just, and good, a transcript of the holiness, justice, and goodness of the divine nature, the very image of his heart. The divine law therefore is suited in its own nature to excite holy affections in the divinely enlightened soul, as well as the cross of Christ. And in fact it does so, from the very moment his eyes begin to be opened at con-

version, until they are perfectly opened in heaven. *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether, more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb.* Ps. xix. 7. 10.

Obj. "But what occasion was there then for the death of Christ?"

Ans. 1. Absolutely none at all, under a notion the law was too severe, a bad, an unamiable law, and we the abused, injured party, that by his death he might purchase for us the relief which was our due, and so pacify our embittered angry minds, which had been exasperated against the Deity, the lawgiver, and bring us to have a good thought of God, as being "altogether made up of love to us;" and in this view to be reconciled to him, against whom, viewed as exhibited in his holy law, "we are full of hatred and heart-risings, in spite of our hearts." To believe the Son of God died for this purpose, to view his death in this light, and to grow devout in such a view, is as bad as right down infidelity. And such a religion, resulting from these blasphemous views, must be infinitely provoking to the Deity. No American Pagan, no African Hottentot, ever espoused a scheme of religion, more absurd in itself, or more impious in its nature. "What occasion was there then for the death of Christ?"

2. "What occasion?" A surprizingly stupid question! When, as the beauty of the divine law, and the transcendent beauty and glory of the divine character as exhibited in the law was the occasion, the great occasion, the only occasion, of the death of an incarnate God, in the room of a God-despising, God-hating world, that thereby he might vindicate the divine character, declare it to be right, and give a public proof, the greatest which could have been given, that the law was holy, just, and good, to the end that, consistent with the honour of his character and government, and to the glory of his grace, God might have mercy on whom he will have mercy, open the eyes of the elect, and bring them to repent and return to God through Jesus Christ, and in his name, and simply on his account, pardon and save them

with an everlasting salvation. And besides, this very view of the divine law, is the very thing which leads the enlightened soul to see its need of Christ's atonement: for no man can see his need of the atonement of Christ to do honour to the divine law, unless he sees that which renders it needful: but the excellency and honourableness of the divine law, which we had dishonoured, was the only thing which rendered the atonement of Christ needful, in order to our salvation. If the law had not been a glorious law, and worthy of this honour, there had been no need, no occasion for the death of Christ in order to our salvation, as has been before proved.——But to return:

All holy affections, I say, are begotten and excited by the truth. On the other hand, in all false schemes of religion, their love and joy, and all their devout affections, in which a carnal heart is so much pleased, are begotten and excited by a lie; a lie invented to please a carnal heart. I say, in all false schemes of religion. And this is the reason that false schemes of religion are adhered to by deluded sinners with such an invincible obstinacy. They suit their carnal hearts; but they hate the truth. And therefore, in the apostolic age, while the apostles were yet alive, with all their inspiration, their miracles, their zeal, their tears, they could not help the matter; but in spite of all they could do, it in fact was, as St. Paul told Timothy, *Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.* 2 Tim. iii. 13.

Yea, such is the nature of mankind, and such the nature of our holy religion, that nothing can be done to purpose in propagating true Christianity, without divine influences from above. The experiment has been made, and thoroughly made. Our blessed Saviour preached at Corazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and spake as never man spake, and wrought many miracles before their eyes; but not so much as one of his hearers were brought to repentance by all his preaching and miracles, those only excepted, to whom God by his spirit internally revealed the truth in its glory. Yea, our Saviour had no expectation to make converts by the force of preaching and miracles. He even laid it down for a maxim, *that no man can come to the Son but whom the Father draws.*

Without divine teaching he knew that all external instruction would be ineffectual. But he always laid all the blame at the sinner's door. Mat. xi. 20, 25. John vi. 44. chap. viii. 42. 47. chap. xv. 22. Mat. xxii. 1. 7.

So likewise the apostle Paul, of mere men the best preacher that ever lived, let him preach *in the demonstration of the spirit and power*, let him *travail in birth* for his hearers, and *reason out of the Scriptures*, and add miracles to his arguments, it was all the same; the Jews were provoked, and the Gentiles laughed; Christ crucified was a stumbling-block to the one, and foolishness to the other. Nor did he ever make one sincere convert to Christianity in his life, merely by the force of external means. Nay, after long experience, he publicly declared to the world, that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* Meanwhile the false teachers, who hated St. Paul, could make converts thick and fast, sincere converts to their false schemes among graceless professors, whose hearts, like tinder, stood ready to catch the false fire which they communicated. A carnal heart may love a false Gospel. Among the great variety of false schemes, perhaps there is no carnal heart but may find some one to his mind. If not, he can invent one of his own exactly to suit his state. But no unregenerate man will love the truth. Neither arguments nor miracles will bring him to it.

4. What has been said, may lead us to see what St. Paul means by *the calling*, the *holy calling*, the *heavenly calling*, the *high calling of God in Christ Jesus*, which he speaks of as common to all true saints, and peculiar to them alone. (1 Cor. i. 26. 2 Tim. i. 9. Heb. iii. 1. Phil. iii. 14.) Speaking of this *calling*, in Rom. viii. 28. he says, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are CALLED according to his purpose." And again, ver. 30. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also CALLED; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." And in 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. "We preach Christ crucified unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are

CALLED Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Compared with ver. 18. "The preaching of the cross is to them that PERISH, foolishness; but unto us who are SAVED, it is the power of God." Compared with 1 Cor ii. 14. "The NATURAL man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Ver. 15. "But he that is SPIRITUAL judgeth all things." Compared with Rom. viii. 9. "If any man have not the SPIRIT of Christ, he is none of his." Compared also with 2 Cor. iv. 3. "If our Gospel is HID, it is hid to them that are LOST," (ver. 4.) "in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (ver. 6.) "For he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Compared with 1 Thes. i. 5. "For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Chap. ii. 13. "When ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but, (as it is in truth,) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."—Compared with Mat. xiii. 23. "He that received seed into good ground, is he that heareth the word and UNDERSTANDETH it, which also beareth fruit." Explained by 2 Cor, iii. 18. "We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image."

When the apostles went forth, according to their master's commission, to preach the Gospel to every creature, they first declared, explained, and proved the great truths they had to deliver, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God: then they CALLED upon their hearers, to *repent and believe the Gospel*, to *repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus*, to *repent and be converted*, to *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*, to *repent and turn to God*, saying, *all things are ready, come unto the marriage* [d].—Many

d Mr. Sandeman imagining that there is forgiveness with God through the tonement for impenitent sinners, while such, would not have sinners called upon

who heard these things, who had this external CALL, made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize, others mocked, and others were enraged. Thus many were CALLED who did not come. For their eyes were blind that they could not see, and their ears were heavy that they could not hear. But as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. The elect obtained, and the rest were blinded. For *whom he did predestinate, them he also* CALLED. And these all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, were changed into the same image, from glory to glory.

WHOM *he did predestinate, them also he called.* *He*, that is, *God.* God himself called them. As it is written, *they shall be all taught of God.* God himself *revealed these things to them.* Mat. xi. 25. Opened the whole Gospel way of life, in its divine glory to their souls; and so gave them to see, that it was in truth, *the word of God.* In which view, the call of the Gospel to repent and be converted, to turn to God through Jesus Christ, could not fail to be effectual. They beheld the Gospel in its glory, they believed it to be true, every answerable affection was begotten in their hearts, they exercised repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, they loved the Gospel, they loved the brethren, they loved all mankind, they were willing to part with all things, and even joyfully to lay down their lives for the truth. And whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. For nothing could ever

in the apostolic language, *repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;* or, in the language of our Saviour, *come for all things are ready.* Rather he would have preachers only endeavour to hold forth evidence to convince sinners, that there is forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners, while such. A passive belief of which, he says, begets hope that I am pardoned. And this hope begets love to this doctrine of forgiveness, which thus relieves me; in which he says all godliness consists. And thus, as no act, exercise, or exertion of the human mind is requisite in order to pardon, on his scheme, so the sinner is to be called to no act, exercise, or exertion whatsoever. And therefore he entirely excludes the *call of the Gospel.* And as the *external call* of the Gospel is left out of his scheme, so also is the *internal call.* And a passive belief that there is forgiveness with God for impenitent sinners, and a hope that I am forgiven, supply the place of that *effectual calling* which was essential to the apostolic scheme. See his Letters on Theron, and to Mr. Pike.

separate them from the love of God, neither tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword: nay, in all these things they were more than conquerors,, through him who loved them. For the same mind was in them that was in Christ Jesus, and which carried him through all the labours of his life, and sufferings of his death. For the Spirit of Christ dwelt in them, and they were able to do all things, through Christ strengthening them.—And thus, this was the true nature of Christ's holy religion in ancient times, in the apostolic age.

And thus we have considered the nature and glory of the Gospel, the nature and consequences of spiritual blindness, and the nature and effects of divine illumination, as was proposed: and nothing now remains, but in as few words as possible, to point out the fundamental principles on which all the reasonings in this essay are built, and to show that we must come into this system of sentiments, or turn infidels, or with heretics of old, be inconsistent, and so self-condemned. ——And this shall be attempted in the Conclusion.

THE CONCLUSION.

There is no consistent Medium between ancient Apostolic Christianity, and Infidelity.

IF the judicious, candid reader, will now stop, look back, and review from beginning to end, the foregoing essay, he will find the whole system of sentiments contained in it, all naturally founded in, and resulting from, these THREE PROPOSITIONS.

PROP. I. The great God, the Creator, Preserver, Lord, and Governor of the world, is an absolutely perfect, an infinitely glorious and amiable Being, the supreme good, infinitely worthy of supreme love and honour, and universal obedience from his creature man.

PROP. II. The divine law, which requires this of us, on pain of eternal death, is holy, just, and good, a glorious law, worthy to be magnified and kept in honour in God's government.

PROP. III. The design of the mediatorial office and work of the Son of God incarnate, was to do honour to the divine law, and thereby open a way in which God might call, and sinners might come to him, and be received to favour, and entitled to eternal life, consistent with the honour of the divine government.

If these three propositions are true, then that whole scheme of sentiments which necessarily results from them, must be equally true. To grant the propositions, and to deny their necessary consequences, is to be inconsistent. And he who denies the *first* proposition, that is, the existence of an absolutely perfect Being, is an atheist. And to deny the *second* or the *third*, is to give up the bible and be an infidel. Again, he who owns the first must grant the second, or be inconsistent. For, if God is such a Being, as the first asserts, the divine law must be what the second affirms. And if the first and second are true, no man can doubt of the third.

But to reduce all to one point, and to be a little more particular; *Christ was made a curse, to redeem us from the curse of the law;* even from the *curse of that law* which curses every one that *continueth not in all things.* To deny that this law, from the curse of which Christ redeems us, requires perfect obedience, is expressly to contradict the word of God, which declares, that it requires us to *continue in all things.* To deny that this law comprises eternal ruin in its curse, is again expressly to contradict the word of God, which declares, that Christ delivers his people *from the wrath to come;* and over and over again declares, that the *wrath to come* will be *everlasting*, where the *worm shall never die*, and the *fire never be quenched.* It therefore appears to be a fact, as certain as that the New Testament is true, that the Son of God incarnate, died on the cross, to bear the curse of that law which required perfect obedience of us, on pain of eternal misery. Now,

That the Son of God, by his Father's appointment, should leave the world of glory, become incarnate, appear, and stand, and die in our room, to bear the curse which was by law due to us, is a fact, the most wonderful and astonishing that ever reached human ears. And pray, what end had God the Father, or God the Son, in this infinitely surprising affair?

To say that God the Father gave his only begotten and well beloved Son to die, absolutely for no end at all, when sinners might have been saved in every respect as well without; is to say, that *Christ crucified*, is *not the wisdom of God.* And the doctrine of the cross must be owned to be, what its ancient adversaries affirmed, *foolishness.* Which is to say, it is not from God.

If the Son of God incarnate, was made a curse to redeem us from the curse of the law, for some end; it must have been either, 1st, Because the law was bad, was too severe; and so he died to deliver us from the too great rigour and severity of the law, and to put us under a more equitable constitution; or, 2d, he died because the law was good, to do it honour, to declare God's righteousness, that he might be just, and yet the justifier of the believer. A third end, distinct from these two, cannot be mentioned.

If the Son of God left his Father's bosom, became incarnate, and died on the cross, because the law was bad, was too severe, &c. then it will follow, (1st) that in fact, the law was bad, and God the Father knew it, and God the Son knew it. (2d) It had therefore been inconsistent with every perfection of the divine nature, to have held mankind bound by this law, if Christ had never died. And therefore, (3d) there was evidently no need of his death in the case; unless we will say, (heaven forbid the blasphemy,) that God the Father was such a tyrant, that he could not do us justice, unless moved thereto by the blood of his own Son.—Which to say, is worse than down-right infidelity.

If the Son of God left his Father's bosom, became incarnate, and died on the cross, because the law was good, to do it honour, &c. then also it will follow, 1st, that the law was in fact good, and worthy of all this honour: and God the Father knew it, and God the Son knew it; yea, and every child of Adam knows it, whose eyes are opened to see it as it is. 2d And therefore all our ill thoughts of the divine law are groundless, yea, infinitely criminal. They are of the nature of blasphemy against God the Father and God the Son. And he who does not look upon this law, as glorious, so infinitely honoured by the Father and the Son,

may justly be reputed an enemy to the Father and the Son. And in a peculiar manner, an enemy to the cross of Christ. 3d. The divine glory of the atonement, primarily consists in its doing infinite honour to this glorious law, thereby asserting the rights of the Godhead, and condemning the sin of an apostate world. 4th. He therefore who is blind to the beauty of the divine nature, the excellency of the divine law, and the great evil of sin, must of necessity be blind to the glory of the atonement. 5th. Yea, he who does not view the divine law as glorious, worthy to be magnified and made honourable, can see no reason why it was honoured on the cross of Christ. And so can see no wisdom, nor any other divine perfection, in the death of an incarnate God. 6th. Until the divine perfections exhibited to view on the cross, are seen, and seen in their glory, the Gospel will not be believed with all the heart, nor will those holy affections which constitute the Christian character, be produced by it. And *if our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* 7th. It must be entirely owing to a supernatural, divine influence, that a mind alienated from, and at enmity against God's character and law, becomes struck with the beauty, and charmed with the glory, of each, as honoured with the highest honours on the cross of Christ. And therefore, *except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

These, together with that whole system of sentiments in close connexion with these, contained in the preceding essay, will follow, if Christ died because the law was good, to do it honour. To grant that Christ died for this end, and to deny the consequences, is to be inconsistent. To deny that Christ died for this end, inevitably leads to infidelity. To say that Christ did not die because the law was good, to do it honour, is to say, there was no good reason for his death. To say he died because the law was bad, to get it repealed, is to offer a reason worse than none. And to say either, is to say, that Christianity is not from God.

It remains, therefore, that there is no consistent medium between the ancient apostolic Christianity, and down-right infidelity.——And accordingly,

In strict truth, in the sight of God, who searcheth the heart, there are but two sorts of men in Christendom; and at the day of judgment it will appear so to all the world. Now we are divided into a great variety of sects and parties, but then of all these sects and parties, there will appear to be but two sorts of men, believers and unbelievers. And then that most remarkable saying of Jesus Christ, will take effect, and be fulfilled. *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.*

No man on earth, or angel in heaven, has a right to vary or alter the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, to accommodate it to the notions of the learned, or to the experiences of the unlearned. Nay, but the spirit of inspiration, which is in effect the same as if God himself had spoken with an audible voice from heaven, St. Paul, with the utmost solemnity, once and and again, declared, as it were to the whole Christian world in a body, that *if any man or angel shall preach any other Gospel, let him be* ACCURSED. And all who, with St. Paul, sincerely love the Gospel of Christ, as it is, must therefore stand ready from the heart to say, AMEN.——For,

As the Gospel is one harmonious, connected whole, so he who alters it in any single point, to be consistent, must alter the whole; that is, must give up that whole system of truths, and substitute in its room a whole system of lies; a system subversive of, and directly contrary to, the whole Gospel of Christ. For instance, he who denies the character of the Father, must deny the character and office of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. For if the Father is not in himself infinitely worthy of our supreme love, previous to the consideration of our being pardoned, the divine law, which requires this, previous to that consideration, was not good. The death of Christ then, to do it honour, was needless. And the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit to bring us to view God in this light, there was no occasion for; if there is no amiableness in the divine nature previous to the consideration of his being my reconciled friend. And if my want of love, and all my disaffection to the divine character arises simply from considering him as my enemy, let him but declare himself my friend, and I shall love him, with that kind of love which

alone is his due. For it is natural to those who are *born of the flesh*, to love a friend and benefactor. *For sinners love those that love them.* And if my disaffection to the Deity results only from his being my enemy; then, as the breach began on his side, so it belongs to him to retract first. And if he loves me, I shall love him. No mediator or sanctifier is needed in the case. So the whole Gospel is overthrown. The sinner is justified: God and his law condemned. The same may be said of every false scheme of religion. He who denies one single truth, let him be consistent, and he must deny the whole. And he who believes one error, let him be consistent, and he must believe a whole system of lies. And it was in this view that St. Paul pronounced the man or angel accursed, who should preach another Gospel. Because if his other Gospel was true, *Christ is dead in vain*, and the whole of Christianity is overthrown. Gal. ii. 21. And as this was the case, with the false scheme which St. Paul then opposed; so it is equally true, as to every false scheme which has been advanced since. For, as it is enmity to the true Gospel, which is contrary to every vicious bias in the human heart, that is the source of every false Gospel, which is adapted to justify our corruptions; (John iii. 19, 20, 21.) so of course, every false Gospel is in its own nature contrary to, and subversive of the true. But he who hates the true Gospel of Christ so entirely, that he would overthrow the whole of it, were he able, as he is a thorough enemy to God and to his Son; so St. Paul's sentence against him, *let him be accursed*, is not more severe than that of his Master, *he that believeth not shall be damned.* A sentence, which, when it comes to be put in execution at the day of judgment, will meet with universal approbation and applause from all holy beings in the universe. As this is the most important subject in the world, and as we are all infinitely interested in it; so it demands the most serious consideration, and impartial, and strict examination of all the professors of Christianity. He therefore that *hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

END OF VOLUME II.